

# 3, 2, 1... Blast Off!



NASA

Now you can take a trip to Mars without ever leaving Earth.

A kid reporter journeyed to Mars aboard Disney's new space ride. Find out how close her ride was to the real thing.

*Weekly Reader* kid reporter Sonia Mia Diaz blasted into space. This 10-year-old from Florida was on a journey to Mars.

Sonia Mia rocketed to Mars aboard a new ride called Mission: SPACE. She experienced the ride during its opening week at Walt Disney World's Epcot Center in Orlando, Florida.

After her mission, Sonia Mia interviewed Sue Bryan, one of the ride's creators. Sonia Mia learned that Disney worked closely with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to develop the new space attraction. The ride lets people experience what a trip to Mars might be like in the future.

## A Space Adventure

On her journey, Sonia Mia never actually left the ground. The ride gives people the feeling of blasting off and traveling through space. "We really wanted people to feel as close as they could to what it's like to be an astronaut," said Bryan.

Sonia Mia read quotes about space exploration as she waited in line. Information about space history fills the attraction. There is even a moon car called a lunar rover on loan from a museum.

## An Intense Liftoff

Before boarding the shuttle, Sonia Mia and three other riders were given different roles for the mission. Those roles included commander, pilot, navigator, and engineer.

Sonia Mia was assigned to be the engineer. In real life, Sally Ride, the first U.S. woman in space, performed the same role.

After Sonia Mia strapped herself in, the shuttle moved into launch position. The countdown began, and the shuttle blasted off! During the mission, Sonia Mia and her team used buttons and joysticks to perform the tasks associated with their roles. The ride lasted about 4 minutes.

The mission was as intense as Sonia Mia had hoped. What was her favorite part? The liftoff! "I liked the intensity of the blastoff and the air pressure on my face," she said.

## A Realistic Ride?

So how did the ride live up to a real space shuttle mission? Weekly Reader caught up with NASA astronaut Winston Scott to ask him that question.

Scott launched into space on two shuttle flights. He tested out Mission: SPACE and gave it a big thumbs up. "It's a thrill a minute," he said.

Although no astronauts have been to Mars yet, Scott said the ride's liftoff was realistic. The feeling of moving up the launch pad and being forced back into your seat were similar to those felt on a shuttle.

However, he points out, there are differences. In an actual launch, astronauts feel about three times the force of **gravity**. Gravity is the force that pulls things toward Earth.

The blastoff on the ride was also shorter than an actual liftoff. And, he said, riders don't experience weightlessness. On a real space shuttle, astronauts become weightless because there is no gravity.

For many people, the ride brings to mind the courage of space explorers. As Sonia Mia pointed out, "Going on the ride made me think about how brave astronauts are."

## Interview With an Imagineer

Sonia Mia Diaz interviewed Sue Bryan, one of the forces behind Mission: SPACE. Here's what Sonia Mia learned.

**Sonia Mia:** What is an Imagineer?

**Sue Bryan:** Imagineers are people who work for Disney.

In general, Imagineering is about storytelling. We build attractions that put people who visit our parks into different worlds and stories. We also use technology to tell stories.

**Sonia Mia:** What was your role in creating the ride?

**Bryan:** I'm the senior show producer, which is like being a movie director. A movie director guides people and directs the show, including the lighting, music, artists, and motion you experience on the ride.

**Sonia Mia:** Where did your team get the inspiration for Mission: SPACE?

**Bryan:** People have always had an interest in space. The time and technology were right to create this new space attraction. We worked closely with NASA to develop the science and technology behind the attraction. No one has ever put people into a ride system like this before.

**Sonia Mia:** Before the ride, I was warned not to move my head or close my eyes because of motion sickness. I didn't feel sick, but might a person if he or she does those things?

**Bryan:** That could happen if you move your head, because of the technology used to create the ride. We give those recommendations because we want people to feel most comfortable. Some people can move their heads, and it doesn't bother them at all.

**Sonia Mia:** How many times have you been on Mission: SPACE?

**Bryan:** At last count, I've ridden it more than 400 times!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Visitors riding on Mission: SPACE are given roles before they board the shuttle. Which role is NOT offered on the ride?

- A pilot
- B navigator
- C scientist
- D engineer

2. What did astronaut Winston Scott find *similar* about the Mission: SPACE ride compared to his real space missions?

- A the feeling of moving up the launch pad
- B the feeling of three times the force of gravity during launch
- C the amount of time of the blast off
- D the feeling of weightlessness in space

3. Why would the ride creators work closely with NASA to build Mission: SPACE?

- A to provide space suits to riders
- B to understand the dangers of space travel
- C to make the ride as realistic as possible
- D to help prepare astronauts to visit Mars

4. Read the following sentence: "On a real space shuttle, astronauts become weightless because there is no gravity."

In the passage, the word **weightless** most nearly means

- A heavy
- B light
- C thick
- D weak

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A a new museum
- B a new roller coaster
- C a new computer
- D a new space ride

6. How did Sonia Mia travel to Mars without leaving Earth?

---

---

---

7. Sue Bryan tells Sonia Mia that she has ridden Mission: SPACE more than 400 times. As the senior show producer, why would it be important for her to ride that many times?

---

---

---

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ it feels like you are blasting off into space, the Mission: SPACE ride is quite thrilling.

- A yet
- B because
- C so
- D although

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

Imagineers at Disney World Parks build attractions to put people in different worlds and stories.

Who? imagineers

(do) What? \_\_\_\_\_

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**10.** Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

**Vocabulary Word:** associated (as · so · ci · at · ed): connected.

**10a.** Read the five sentences below and underline the word **associated** in each sentence.

1. Sue Bryan associated creating rides with storytelling.
2. The children associated birthdays with cake and presents because they received these every year.
3. The dog associated the bell with a treat because every time his owner rang the bell, he got a treat.
4. The police officers had to learn all the laws associated with their jobs, so they knew what to do on the job.
5. After visiting the farm and seeing how cows produced milk, the boy associated milk with cows.

**10b.** Which image is most likely associated with Halloween?



**11.** What qualities do you associate with being a successful student?

---

---

---

---

## Teacher Guide & Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 840

**Passage Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** The passage “3,2,1...Blast Off!” describes a Mars space flight simulation ride from the experience of a kid reporter. Sonia Mia also interviews an astronaut who compares and contrasts it to a real space flight, as well as one of the ride’s creators.

1. Visitors riding on Mission: SPACE are given roles before they board the shuttle. Which role is NOT offered on the ride?

- A pilot
- B navigator
- C **scientist**
- D engineer

2. What did astronaut Winston Scott find *similar* about the Mission: SPACE ride compared to his real space missions?

- A **the feeling of moving up the launch pad**
- B the feeling of three times the force of gravity during launch
- C the amount of time of the blast off
- D the feeling of weightlessness in space

3. Why would the ride creators work closely with NASA to build Mission: SPACE?

- A to provide space suits to riders
- B to understand the dangers of space travel
- C **to make the ride as realistic as possible**
- D to help prepare astronauts to visit Mars

4. Read the following sentence: “On a real space shuttle, astronauts become weightless because there is no gravity.”

In the passage, the word **weightless** most nearly means

- A heavy
- B **light**
- C thick
- D weak

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A a new museum
- B a new roller coaster
- C a new computer
- D **a new space ride**

6. How did Sonia Mia travel to Mars without leaving Earth?

**Suggested answer:** Sonia Mia rode Mission: SPACE, a space ride at Disney. The attraction gives riders the feeling of blasting off and traveling in space. [paragraphs 3, 5]

7. Sue Bryan tells Sonia Mia that she has ridden Mission: SPACE more than 400 times. As the senior show producer, why would it be important for her to ride that many times?

**Suggested answer:** It would be important for Sue to ride many times to test out the experience, check things like lighting, motion and see if there are ways to make the ride better for visitors. [paragraph 22]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ it feels like you are blasting off into space, the Mission: SPACE ride is quite thrilling.

- A yet
- B **because**
- C so
- D although

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Imagineers at Disney World Parks build attractions to put people in different worlds and stories.

Who? imagineers

(do) What? **build attractions**

Where? **Disney World parks**

Why? **to put people in different worlds and stories**

10. ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

**Vocabulary Word:** associated

**Step 1:** Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (as · so · ci · at · ed)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is associated. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "associated."]

**Step 2:** Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "The word associated means connected. You would say people, things or ideas are associated when they are connected to each other somehow."
- b. Teacher says: "In the passage, riders of Mission: SPACE completed tasks that were associated with their roles."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "associated."]



**Step 3:** Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the first sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. Sue Bryan associated creating rides with storytelling.
  2. The children associated birthdays with cake and presents because they received these every year.
  3. The dog associated the bell with a treat because every time his owner rang the bell, he got a treat.
  4. The police officers had to learn all the laws associated with their jobs, so they knew what to do on the job.
  5. After visiting the farm and seeing how cows produced milk, the boy associated milk with cows.

**Step 4:** Check for student understanding

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

- 10b.** Which image is most likely associated with Halloween?



- 11.** What qualities do you associate with being a successful student?

**Suggested answer:** Someone who is hard-working, inquisitive, smart, and persistent.

*Suggested Additional Vocabulary:* journey, attraction, intense, inspiration, recommendations