

Stranded in Space

The perilous voyage of Apollo 13

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 960L (captions only)
For qualitative complexity factors, go to
Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to analyze
how a theme is developed over the
course of a play

Featured Skill: theme

**Additional skills covered in this
lesson plan:** author's craft, text
structure, character, mood

Essential Questions:

- What is the value of space exploration?
- How do we find solutions in the face of adversity?
- What is failure? What is success?

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Slideshow:

- “We’re Going Back to the Moon”

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- Special Collection: The Wonders of Space

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions
- Featured Skill: Theme
- Choice Board
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz*

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Prepare to Read (10 minutes)

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *consoles, deploy, direct, disoriented, gravest, navigate*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

2. Read and Discuss (55 minutes)

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud the As You Read box on page 13 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class.
- Divide students into groups to discuss the following **Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking** questions, which are also located in the Resources tab.

Close-Reading Questions

(25 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **When do the events of Scene 1 take place in the chronological order of the story? Why do you think the playwright chose to structure the play this way?** (author's craft) *The events of Scene 1 take place just before the events of Scene 3. The playwright likely begins the play with the events of Scene 1 to build interest and suspense: By the end of the scene, all of the astronauts' oxygen and fuel tanks are either at zero or falling fast, and readers are left wondering whether the men will be able to make it home before it is too late.*
2. **What does Scene 2 help readers understand about the time period in which the play is set?** (text structure) *Scene 2 helps readers understand that the play takes place during an exciting period in the history of space exploration. The play is set in April 1970; astronauts had*

walked on the moon for the first time only nine months earlier. The music, reporters, and assembled crowd reveal how excited the public was to see Americans walk on the moon again.

3. **In Scene 4, Marilyn Lovell says, “Your dad always says that when you are in a difficult situation, you don’t think of the odds. You just think about how to improve the odds.” Put what Jim Lovell says in your own words.** (character) *Jim Lovell means that when you are in a challenging or dangerous situation, instead of thinking about how likely you are to fail or succeed, you should focus on what you can do to increase your chances of success.*
 4. **Describe the mood throughout most of Scene 9. How does the playwright create this mood?** (mood) *The mood throughout most of Scene 9 is suspenseful and tense. The playwright creates this mood by including details about how various people are reacting to the astronauts’ dire situation. The Stage Directors state that people around the world are gathered around their televisions and that those at Mission Control “stare breathlessly at the screens.” Because readers know there is a risk of Odyssey burning up as it reenters Earth’s atmosphere, the Stage Directors’ descriptions of the shimmering pink heat outside the spacecraft’s window that turns orange and then red also build anxiety for readers. The Stage Directors’ counting of the minutes and seconds that go by, along with Mission Control’s repetition of “Odyssey, Houston standing by, over”—without receiving a response—create more and more tension before a voice finally comes over the radio.*
 5. **Support the following statement using text evidence from the play: Flight Director Gene Kranz is a good leader.** (character) *Flight Director Gene Kranz is a good leader because during the Apollo 13 crisis, he stays calm and focused, and he establishes a spirit of determination and optimism at Mission Control. After the explosion, Kranz keeps the astronauts and those at Mission Control calm, telling them to stick to what they know. When presented with the problem of moving the three-man crew into the Lunar Module for four days—a module designed to keep two men alive for two days—a “steely-eyed” Kranz responds, “All right. Let’s bring them home. Failure is not an option.” Later, when fielding engineers’ concerns about restarting the spacecraft—something that had never been done in space before—Kranz tells the engineers, “Let’s not lose faith now.” He never loses hope or confidence in his team, and as a result he inspires the whole team to feel hope and confidence. This makes him a good leader.*
- As a class, discuss the following questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What life lessons can we draw from the Apollo 13 story? In other words, how can the experiences of the characters be applied to challenges we might face in our own lives?** *Answers will vary, but students might refer to taking a one-step-at-a-time approach, to remaining calm, to working with others to solve problems, and to maintaining determination and hope.*

2. **The Apollo 13 mission was called “a successful failure.” Why might that be?** *Students may say that perhaps Apollo 13 was called a “successful failure” because while the astronauts and engineers failed at their original goal of landing on the moon, they achieved the possibly even more difficult goal that arose in its place: returning the astronauts safely to Earth under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. In the end, the “failed” mission made NASA and the American people extremely proud, giving everyone confidence in their abilities to do anything they put their minds to.*

3. Extend Learning (10 minutes)

View a Slideshow (10 minutes)

- As an extension activity, project the **slideshow “We’re Going Back to the Moon”** on your whiteboard to explore together as a class. The slideshow provides information about NASA’s new lunar program, Artemis.

4. Write About It: Theme (45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Theme**. This activity will prepare them to respond to the writing prompt on page 18 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

In the epilogue, Haise says that ingenuity, leadership, and teamwork brought the crew home safely. In a short essay, explain how his statement is supported by details in the play.

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. (Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or article.)

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- [Special Collection: The Wonders of Space](#)