

A is for Astronaut

Blasting Through the Alphabet



Written by Astronaut Clayton Anderson and Illustrated by Scott Brundage


With the formation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958, the seven men designated as the Mercury astronauts would be the first Americans ever selected to venture into the unknown of outer space. Described by NASA simply as Group 1, they were also known as the Mercury 7 or the Original 7.

These military fighter-pilots-turned-astronauts (M. Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper Jr., John H. Glenn Jr., Gus Grissom, Wally M. Schirra Jr., Deke Slayton, and Alan B. Shepard) became instant American heroes.

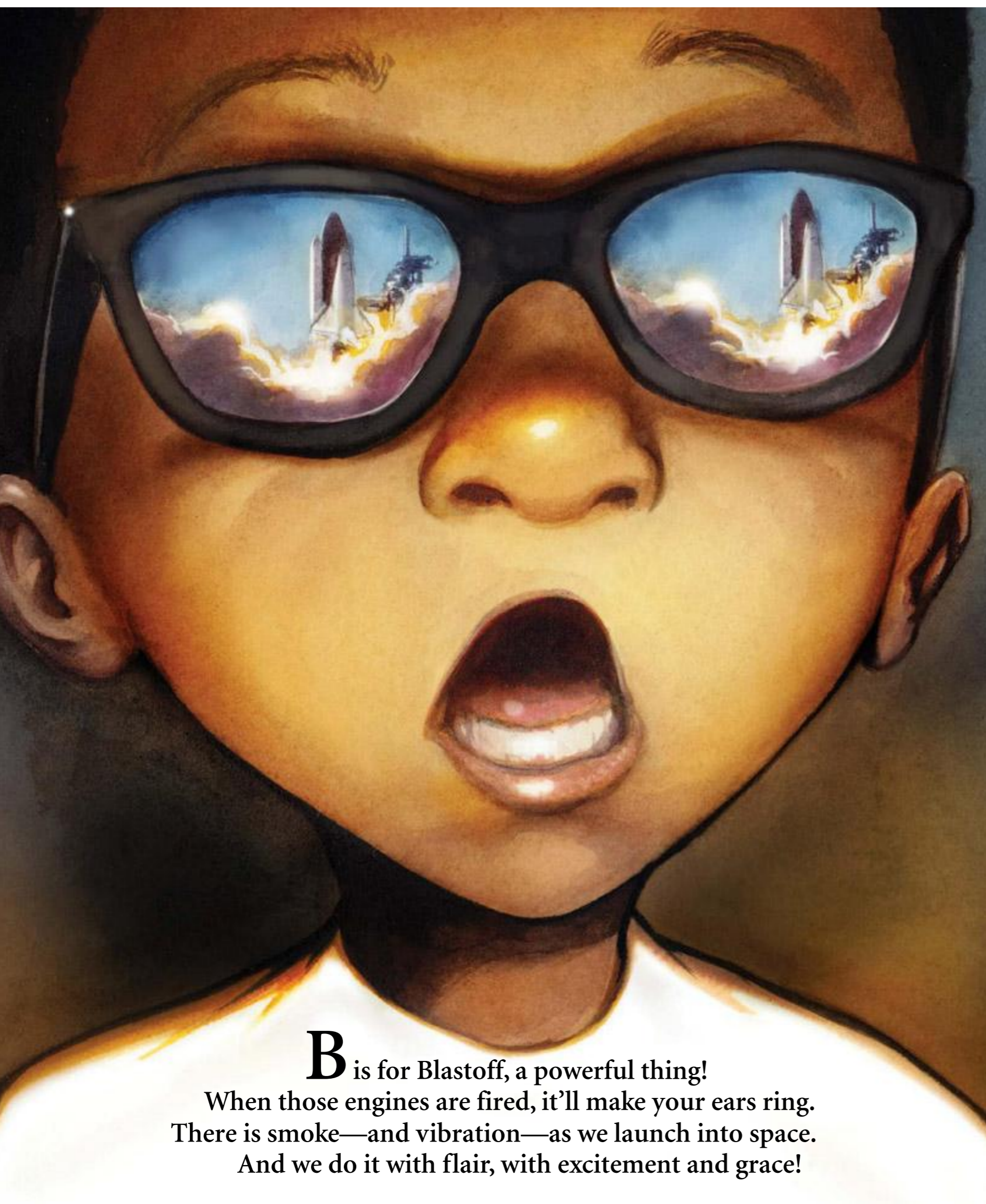
Since that first group of astronauts, approximately 350 astronaut candidates, making up 22 different groups, have been selected to be United States astronauts. All astronaut groups are given nicknames, like Penguins, 8-Balls, Turtles, and Bugs!

Aa





A is for Astronaut,
the bravest of souls.
They fly into space
and assume many roles.
They pilot, they spacewalk,
and they even cut hair.
But seeing Earth from our orbit—
that will cause them to stare!



B is for Blastoff, a powerful thing!
When those engines are fired, it'll make your ears ring.
There is smoke—and vibration—as we launch into space.
And we do it with flair, with excitement and grace!

The launch of the space shuttle was an amazing sight to see. The shuttle, powered by two solid rocket motors and three space shuttle main engines, generated nearly 7 million pounds of thrust at liftoff!

The shuttle “stack” (the shuttle, its boosters, and orange fuel tank) traveled at more than 120 miles an hour by the time it cleared the launch pad. The blastoff is simply a well-controlled explosion.

Just six minutes after liftoff, the shuttle is moving so fast that everything on board will weigh nearly three times more than it did on Earth. Then, 2.5 minutes later, when the main engines cut off, everything will be floating. Welcome to outer space! Please enjoy the view!

Bb



The Capsule's important, and it starts with a **C**.
It's a tiny compartment, much too crowded for me.
Our heroes will live there, through all of their flight.
They'll eat, sleep, and work in a space that's quite tight!

C
C

Early space capsules were very small and compact. The Mercury program capsule could carry a single astronaut, and Alan Shepard was the first American to launch into space. Later, Project Gemini's capsule took two astronauts. For the Apollo moon missions, the capsule was large enough for three space fliers, and the space shuttles could carry a crew of seven.

Today NASA hopes to send humans back to the moon and then on to Mars. To do that, they are building a huge rocket called the Space Launch System (SLS) and a space capsule called the Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle. Orion, shaped like a big gumdrop, is designed to carry a crew of two to six astronauts to space.

*To Susan, the center of my universe.
For my children, Cole and Sutton, their children . . . and their children's children . . .
And to Marcia Jussel, and those with vision.*

— Clayton



To my dad, who gave me the confidence to shoot for stars.

— Scott

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