



0. Challenger Disaster - Story Preface

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Space Shuttle landing. Online courtesy NASA

*They slipped the surly bonds of earth
To touch the face of God.*

President Reagan January 28, 1986

It was the 25th time a U.S. Space Transportation System would take off from Cape Canaveral. This was no ordinary flight, however. Christa McAuliffe was America's first teacher to fly in space.

With her training complete, and school children anticipating her trip, there was a sense of excitement throughout the country on the evening of January 27, 1986.

People were so used to the flights, most folks no longer watched shuttle liftoffs. This flight was different, though. Everyone - including school children - would be watching because Christa McAuliffe was going into space.

But the shuttle's launch mechanism had a fatal design flaw. As a result, *Challenger* and her seven-member crew - including America's first teacher in space - were blown out of the sky seventy-three seconds after launch on January 28, 1986.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Challenger-Disaster)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Challenger-Disaster)

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Media Stream



Supersonic Transportation System

Image online, courtesy NASA. Photo of the space shuttle "Discovery," taken on September 12, 1993, during the launch of Mission STS-51.

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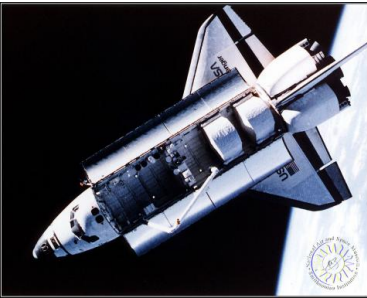
Challenger on Launch Pad Morning of Launch

Image online, courtesy NASA.

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Challenger in Space with Open Payload Doors

The photo, depicted in this image, was taken on February 7, 1984. NASA Image 84-HC-77. Online, courtesy U.S. Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian.

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Challenger's Crew - Mission STS 51-L

NASA Image, online courtesy GRIN (Great Images in NASA).

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Challenger Disaster

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Challenger - Launch and Explosion of STS 51-L

Video, online courtesy NASA.

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