

SCIENCE NEWS

CELEBRATING THE WOMEN OF NASA

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

MARCH is Women's History Month, when we look at and celebrate the role of women throughout history.

US space agency NASA is marking the month by showing the important work done by female scientists at NASA. Some of the amazing things these women did wasn't recognised for many years, so Women's History Month gives us the chance to give these pioneers of space science the recognition and thanks they deserve.

NANCY GRACE ROMAN

Roman was the first woman to hold an executive (very high up) position at NASA. She was in charge of the planning and making of the Hubble Space Telescope, which launched in 1990 and has sent back some of the most amazing photos of space ever taken. The Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, which is currently being made, is named after her.



SALLY RIDE

The first woman in space was Russian cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, who lifted off in 1963. But the first American woman to head for the stars was NASA astronaut Sally Ride. On 18th June 1983, Ride went into space on the shuttle Challenger. She went on another mission in 1984, and spent a total of 343 hours in space.



DOROTHY VAUGHAN, MARY JACKSON, KATHERINE JOHNSON (above, left to right)

Without the work of these three women, many of NASA's biggest achievements, including sending the first people to the moon in the 1960s, would not have happened. Their work was featured in the film *Hidden Figures*, based on a book by Margot Lee Shetterly. Their achievements weren't widely known outside NASA until the book and film were released in 2016.

Jackson was NASA's first black female engineer, Johnson worked on every crewed flight to space until she retired in 1986, and Vaughan was a maths genius and NASA's first ever African-American manager.

GLOSSARY

cosmonaut – A Russian astronaut

crewed – Having people onboard something, eg, a space rocket

engineer – Someone who designs or works on machines

pioneers – People who are one of the first to do something

Questions on: 'Celebrating the women of NASA'

1. What is the idea behind Women's History Month?

2. Match each event to the year.

A film and book is released

1990

The first woman goes to space

2016

A telescope is launched

1983

The first US woman goes to space

1963

3. What has been named after Nancy Grace Roman? Tick the right box.

- A film
- A rocket
- A telescope

4. Who was the first woman in space? Why do you think she is not the focus here?

5a) How many times did Sally Ride go into space?

5b) How many hours did she spend in space?

6. Why do you think Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson and Katherine Johnson have been grouped together?

7. Margot Lee Shetterly didn't work for NASA. Why is she mentioned in the article?

8. If you could speak to just one of these amazing women, who would you speak to, and what would you ask?