

**Lakeland Central School District**  
**Lakeland Copper Beech Middle School, Yorktown Heights, New York**  
**A Tribute to Space Exploration: Past, Present, Future**

## **Apollo 11: The First Walk on the Moon**

Every astronaut, both present and past, aspire to walk on the Moon. They imagine feeling the ejecta blanket (debris that covers the surface of the Moon) below their space boots. They imagine looking all around, and seeing a sky full of stars. They imagine viewing Earth as a small blue marble. This is dream for most people, but for only a few it will become a reality.

Three years after the Apollo 8 mission when Anders, Lovell, and Borman orbited the Moon successfully, a new crew boarded a Saturn V rocket with hopes to reach the Moon. This time their goal was to perform a lunar walk and return to Earth safely. The Apollo 11 mission was designed to accomplish this task.

Three incredibly brave astronauts were part of the Apollo 11 crew: Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin. They left the launch pad in a Delta Saturn V rocket on July 16, 1969. Four days later, the lunar module named “Eagle” touched down on the surface of the Moon. They landed on the Sea of Tranquility. The phrase “the Eagle has landed” became famous as part of this mission.

Upon stepping foot on the surface of the Moon, Neil Armstrong made a powerful and infamous statement about their accomplishment. He exclaimed, “This is one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” By this statement, he meant that physically walking on the Moon was small, but the way this endeavor would impact mankind was tremendous. He was correct: it did! His partner, Buzz Aldrin, accompanied him for a moonwalk while Michael Collins remained in the spacecraft to make sure things were running smoothly for a safe trip home.

One major part of their mission was to collect Moon rocks. Aldrin and Armstrong spent 21 hours on the lunar surface, and collected a total of 46 pounds of moon rocks. Before the astronauts departed for home, they intentionally left something behind. Together, Armstrong and Aldrin planted the United States flag into the dusty surface of the Moon. It remains there to this day, waiting patiently for our return. The astronauts learned that the greatest risk is to not take one.