



Unit Overview

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik* into orbit. This small satellite circled the earth every 92 minutes at a speed of 18,000 miles per hour. The Soviets were ecstatic. The Americans, shocked and humiliated that the Soviets had beaten them into space, were not. *Sputnik* ignited the Space Race, a fierce competition between the world's two superpowers that would continue for nearly 18 years. It's a story of heroic accomplishments on a grand scale. The dramatic story of the Space Race offers students a rich research topic to explore. They will examine primary source documents and conduct independent research to develop a deep understanding of this unique international competition.

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard...”

—President John F. Kennedy, Rice University speech, September 12, 1962

In the lessons on information literacy that begin the unit, students learn how to tell the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources; determine if a source is reliable; and understand ethical uses of information. Having practiced these skills, students are ready to develop and sharpen their sourcing abilities in the next lessons in which they construct their own research questions and explore the internet for answers.

In subsequent lessons, each student is assigned a cosmonaut or astronaut from the Space Race era. They research their cosmonaut or astronaut and write entries into their space blog from their person's point of view. This lesson informs the next sub-unit, a Socratic seminar in which students rely on their research to examine the complicated issues inherent in the history of the Space Race.

As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they've developed to tackle a culminating research assignment—part essay, part media project.

Texts

- The Space Race Collection
- EXTRA: “Stars” by Robert Frost
- EXTRA: Excerpt from *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells
- EXTRA: Excerpt from *A History of US 10: All the People Since 1945* by Joy Hakim



Skills and Content

Topic & Theme: The successes and sacrifices associated with space exploration

Reading: Compare and contrast perspectives on a topic

Writing: Develop a question, conduct research, and create a multimedia project

Activity Highlights: Research a cosmonaut or astronaut and write blog entries from their point of view

Text Features: Primary and secondary source documents, poems, and images

Sensitive Content

In this unit, some texts focus on the controversial subject of how animals were sent into space for research purposes during the Space Race between the US and the USSR. Some students may be sensitive to this content.

Grammar Instruction

The Amplify Grammar Pacing Guide provides a sequence of recommended grammar topics for each grade level and identifies both whole class and self-guided lessons to cover each topic. Use this guide to plan grammar instruction for each Amplify Flex Day.

After you have provided some grammar instruction, assess whether students are applying what they've learned to their own writing during Amplify's 12-minute writing activities. If they need support to integrate and apply a new skill, consider assigning one of the grammar revision assignments (found in the Materials section of each Flex Day) to complete at the end of the next 4 writing prompts.

Resources for grammar instruction:

- Flex Days: The Flex Days provide an opportunity for students to receive regular instruction on needed grammar skills.
- Amplify Grammar Unit: The Grammar unit covers key grammar topics for the middle grades, both grade-level topics and areas where students often need review. Topic Pairings:
 - Sub-units 1 and 2: Sentences
 - Sub-units 3 and 4: Pronouns
 - Sub-units 5 and 6: Verb Tenses
- *Mastering Conventions* PDFs:
 - *Mastering Conventions 1, 2, and 3* contain student exercises and teacher instruction to cover grades 3–8 grammar skills.
 - *Mastering Conventions 4* focuses on spelling, including assessment recommendations, student worksheets, teacher instruction, and word lists.
- The Quill™ program. Amplify has partnered with Quill to provide teachers and students use of Quill's extensive writing and grammar lessons and activities. Use the global navigation to access Quill.