



## Lesson: The Vision of Christa McAuliffe

(To follow Amplify CKLA 3, Knowledge 7: Astronomy, Lesson 9: Space Exploration)

### At a Glance

In this lesson, students continue to investigate the concept of space exploration by learning about, and reflecting upon, the life and mission of Christa McAuliffe, a social studies teacher from Concord, New Hampshire, who was selected to be the first teacher to go to space.

### Primary Focus Objectives

- Students will read a non-fiction text about Christa McAuliffe.
- Students will watch a demonstration of one of Christa McAuliffe's lessons.
- Students will write about teaching in space.

### Formative Assessment

- Group discussion
- Opinion writing

### Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

### Materials

- Focus Text Facts: Christa McAuliffe
- Video: [Newton's Laws Lesson](#)
- Documentary *Christa* and related educator resources from New Hampshire PBS: <https://nhpbs.org/christa/>

### Time Needed

One or two 30-40 minute classes

### Learning Activity

1. **Read the Focus Text Facts.** Read the page with students in small groups and discuss the ideas of "teaching in space" and "space is for everyone." If time allows, complete Mason's Challenge. (15 minutes)
2. **Watch the video.** Project the video and watch the lesson about Newton's laws. Discuss what is similar and different about teaching in a space station and teaching in a classroom. Why do students think Christa McAuliffe was so excited to teach in space? (10 minutes)
3. **Write opinion pieces.** What does "space is for everybody" mean? Challenge students to answer this question with examples and reasons. (25 minutes)



## Educator Rationale and Answer Guide

<b>Connection to Amplify</b>	This lesson extends the learning goals in Amplify CKLA 3, Knowledge 7: Astronomy, Lesson 9: Space Exploration. Students extend their investigation of the purpose and potential of travel by learning about New Hampshire teacher Christa McAuliffe and her plans to be the first teacher in space.
<b>Read the Focus Text Facts</b>	This text introduces students to Christa McAuliffe. It also offers the opportunity to think about something Christa McAuliffe said after she was selected for the Teacher in Space program: "space is for everybody." Why might a teacher want to go to space? Who is everybody? A link is provided in the Materials section to the NHPBS documentary <i>Christa</i> . It may be useful for students to view excerpts from the video so they can hear Christa McAuliffe talking about this topic.
<b>Watch the video</b>	<p>This video is a short introduction to a longer lesson about Newton's laws. The content of the video is a demonstration of the principles explored in a longer lesson intended for older students. But viewing this video gives students an idea of what Christa McAuliffe hoped to accomplish during her mission. Students may enjoy thinking through or trying the experiments they observe in the classroom as part of their comparison of teaching and learning in space versus in the classroom.</p> <p>To view the longer lesson, visit NASA educator resources online at <a href="https://www.nasa.gov/stem-content/christa-mcauliffes-lost-lessons/">https://www.nasa.gov/stem-content/christa-mcauliffes-lost-lessons/</a>.</p> <p>This is a good place to pause if dividing the lesson across two class sessions.</p>
<b>Write opinion pieces</b>	To introduce this opinion writing exercise, continue the discussion of why Christa McAuliffe felt it was so important for people to know that "space is for everybody." Brainstorm together as a whole group and record student ideas on a white board or piece of chart paper. Why do they think it's important to continue teaching and learning about space? Using the writing process familiar to your students, support them as they write at least two paragraphs stating their opinion, supporting it with reasons from the group brainstorm and summarizing their opinion with a concluding sentence.



## ***CHRISTA MCAULIFFE: SPACE IS FOR EVERYBODY***



Christa McAuliffe was born in Boston, Massachusetts. When she grew up, she became a teacher. While she was a social studies teacher at Concord High School in Concord, New Hampshire, she learned about a program that would send a teacher to outer space for the first time. Christa wanted to be that teacher! She believed that space was the next frontier for everyone to explore.

Christa was one of 11,000 teachers who applied to NASA's Teacher in Space program. She was the one chosen for the mission on the space shuttle *Challenger*. She spent many months in training to learn how to live and work in a space craft and on the International Space Station. She planned to teach lessons from space. They would be recorded and shown to children back on Earth.



The *Challenger* mission ended in tragedy when the shuttle exploded shortly after launch. Christa McAuliffe did not get to teach in space. But, people have done many things to continue her work and keep her memory alive. In 2018, astronauts taught several of Christa's lessons on the International Space Station. In 2024, a statue of Christa McAuliffe was installed in front of the New Hampshire State House. It is the first statue of a woman to be placed at the State House.



### ***MASON'S CHALLENGE***

Look at the photograph of the statue of Christa McAuliffe. What do you notice about it? What does it make you wonder?