For American schoolchildren growing up in the 1960s, the Apollo space program was a symbol of the ever-expanding world around them, a world that soon would include travel to the moon. Kevin Reese’s engaging theatre program follows the Apollo program through the eyes of scientist Scott Gibson. Reese stages young Scott’s dreams of becoming an astronomer, his education and research with NASA and his unstoppable desire to see the moon from space with his own eyes. “Apollo to the Moon” captures a very important moment in American history, detailing the excitement, the skepticism, the setbacks and the triumphs using lights, sound, projections and storytelling.
Before the Program

LIST OF TERMS

The following terms in the program have important historical significance. Define these terms and remember how they figure in the plotline of “Apollo to the Moon”:

- Neil Armstrong
- the Cold War
- communications satellite
- Dwight David Eisenhower
- Guss Grissom
- John F. Kennedy
- the Mercury "Super Seven"
- NASA
- Sputnik
- Werner Von Braun
- James Webb
- Lyndon Baines Johnson

“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth. No single space project will be more exciting, more impressive to mankind, or more important, and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.” — John F. Kennedy, 1961

QUESTIONS

- Consult the timeline on the following page of this study guide. What other important events were happening in the world while the “space race” was underway? (John F. Kennedy was President, Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream” speech, the civil rights movement, the erection of the Berlin Wall, rock and roll’s “British invasion,” the Cuban missile crisis, Israel’s Six Days War, etc.)

- Discuss the historical period described as the Cold War. How does the space race reflect this time in American/Russian relations? What is the relationship like now?

- Research and discuss what training, experience and education are needed to become an astronaut. What is the average age of a person who travels in space?

- The first woman in space was a Russian cosmonaut in the early 1960s. When did the first American woman go into space? The first African-American astronaut?
THE MOON RACE: A TIMELINE

1955

October-November 1957
The Russian space program launches
Sputnik I and II, the first artificial
satellites in space. Sputnik II also
carries the first living being to orbit
the earth, a dog named Laika.

1958

President Eisenhower creates NASA,
a government agency devoted to
space exploration

May 5, 1961
Alan Shepard becomes
the first American in space

1960

May 25, 1961
In a speech before Congress,
President Kennedy challenges
NASA to put an American on the
moon by the end of the decade.

April 12, 1961
Russian astronaut Yuri Gagarin
becomes the first human in space.

June 16, 1963
Russian astronaut
Valentina
Tereshkova
becomes the first
woman in space.

1965

January 27, 1967
The Apollo I spacecraft catches fire
during a test run. All three of its crew
members are killed.

June 3, 1965
Ed White becomes the
first American to walk in space

December 21, 1968
The Apollo 8 is the first mission
to take humans to the moon
and back.

1970

July 20, 1969
Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz
Aldrin, aboard the Apollo 11, become
the first humans to walk on the moon.

April 11, 1970
During the third moon landing
mission, an oxygen tank explodes on
the Apollo 13 spacecraft, forcing the
crew to return home before visiting
the moon.

December 14, 1972
American astronauts explore the moon
in a lunar roving
vehicle. This marks
the last mission of
the Apollo program,
as well as the last
time mankind has
been to the moon.
After the Program

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

■ In “Apollo to the Moon,” one actor plays all the characters. How did he change his voice, movement and costume to signify the different parts?

■ What do you think the play’s sculpture-like set represents?

■ Does any of the music used in the play sound familiar to you? What does it remind you of? Before you saw the play, did you associate it with that time period?

ACTIVITY

Find a folktale or myth from another culture that either explains or gives interesting attributes to the Moon. How has the world viewed and understood the moon throughout human history?

Meet the Artist

Actor/designer Kevin Reese and playwright/director Mary Hall Surface work nationally at professional theatres for audiences of all ages. Their productions were featured at the Kennedy Center, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Honolulu Theatre for Youth, the California Theatre Center and others. They have also brought their educational programs to Dublin, Ireland and Lyon France. “Apollo to the Moon” has been performing in Pittsburgh since 1999.
Program Objectives
Students will become familiar with the history of space exploration in America, with special focus on the events that comprise the “space race” of the 1960s. Also, students will identify historical events, themes and cultural milestones through a theatrical presentation.

Curriculum Connections & Standards for grades K-8
This program may be used to address Academic Standards in the following curriculum areas:
- Arts and Humanities
- History
- Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
- Science and Technology

Further Exploration
BOOKS
Schulke, Flip and McPhee, Penelope and Raymond. Your future in space: the U.S. Space Camp training program.

ON THE WEB
www.nasa.gov – Home page of the NASA, with educational links.
www.nasm.si.edu – Webpage of the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum. Great graphics and links!