

Name: _____ Teacher: _____ School: _____

Grade 3: Lesson 8 Independent Practice

Rise to the Challenge

By Dr. Rhea Seddon with Jess-Anna Bornemann

Part 1: Preparation

1. Figure out what is wrong with the patient.
2. Decided which medical tools to use.
3. Take action!

As a young doctor working in emergency rooms across the South, I learned to perform these three steps within seconds. To save my patients' lives, I had to stay calm and think fast. But on April 13, 1985, I found myself in a new situation. I was aboard the space **shuttle** *Discovery*, 25,000 miles from home. My "patient" was a huge, broken machine. My tools were whatever items I could patch together with tape. I had finally reached my goal of becoming a doctor and an astronaut. But was I ready to deal with an emergency in space?

The odds of me going into space were quite slim. I was one of 6,000 people who applied to join NASA in 1977. For the first time, both men and women were being considered for jobs as astronauts. However, only thirty-five of us would make the cut. During my childhood in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, I had imagined becoming a doctor on a space station. At age thirty, I had earned my medical degree. I was halfway there! Now there was a chance, however small, to make the rest of my dream come true.

I got the phone call early in the morning on January 16, 1978. NASA's head of flight operations offered me the job. "Do you still want to join us?" Of course I did! I found out that twenty-nine men and six women had been chosen. I would be Tennessee's first female astronaut. What an honor...and what a challenge!

Before I would be allowed to **soar** above Earth, I had to graduate from a two-year training program. We trained at Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston, Texas. Each day, my brain was packed with as much information as it could hold. In one class, I had a lesson from Neil Armstrong, the first person to walk on the moon.

My muscles were tested, too. I was taught how to fly a small jet and use a parachute. I did scuba training in a giant pool, as practice for a possible spacewalk. At five feet two, I was the shortest of my NASA classmates. Most of NASA's materials weren't designed for someone my size. In earlier years, all astronauts had to be at least five feet six. The orange suits that astronauts wear during launch and landing weigh nearly eighty pounds. Walking in my suit was almost like carrying around another person! Yet no matter how sore or tired I became, I never once thought of complaining. I wanted to prove that women and smaller people could become great astronauts. Each day of training brought me closer to a space **voyage**.

The hard work paid off quickly. NASA decided to end our training after only one year. I wanted to climb aboard a space shuttle right away, but it would be nearly six more years before my first trip. In the meantime, I was given projects that would help other astronauts. Some of the projects drew on my background as a doctor. For example, I helped design medical kits that would be flown on shuttles.

Other work involved things that were completely new to me. I spent months testing the computers that fly space shuttles, and learning how science experiments are prepared for flight. I also worked with a team trying to improve astronauts' meals.

Many foods taken into space are powdery and dry, like the food you might take on a camping trip. At mealtime, astronauts add water to food. My task was to help find which foods would be healthy, tasty, and easy to prepare in space. We learned that strawberries worked well as a space food. Asparagus wasn't bad either, but you had to put the right amount of water in it. Who wants each crunchy, dry asparagus?

Key Details Chart

Key Details

Directions: Using your Key Details chart, write a summary of the main events in our story about Dr. Rhea Seddon. Please add the vocabulary words “shuttle” and “voyage” as you write. Also, add how our memoir author responded to the main events.