

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## John Glenn

By Sharon Fabian

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When John Glenn was a young man, he didn't plan on a career in space flight. Glenn was interested in a career in the military, and in aviation in particular. When he entered the Naval Aviation Cadet Program in 1942, he had no way of knowing that this would be the first step on his path to outer space.

Glenn's training in the cadet program prepared him to be a fighter pilot in World War II. Altogether he flew 59 combat missions in that war. After the war, Glenn became a flight training instructor, teaching young men who wanted to become pilots how to fly for the military. Then, in the Korean War, Glenn again flew combat missions as part of a marine fighter squadron. This time he flew a total of 63 missions.

Next, Glenn entered Test Pilot School. He was interested in the field of aircraft design. He also continued to fly. In fact, in 1957 John Glenn set a new speed record as he flew across the continent from Los Angeles to New York.

Glenn's career had been changing all along. As soon as he finished one job, he always looked for a new area to move into. But, in 1959 his career suddenly took off in an exciting new direction. NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, chose Glenn to be part of a group of men who would train to be astronauts for the Mercury missions.

NASA had a space mission scheduled for 1962, and it chose John Glenn to be the astronaut. This mission, Mercury 6, would be a history-making mission, because the Mercury 6 astronaut would be the first American to orbit the earth in space.

This Mercury mission had simple but important objectives: to put a man in orbit, to observe his reactions to being in space, and to return him safely to earth.

The Mercury 6 spacecraft, named Friendship 7, was carefully designed to help Glenn, and the astronauts on the ground at Kennedy Space Center, meet these objectives. The spacecraft had to protect

Glenn from the tremendous heat and the acceleration forces that would occur as the spacecraft was launched and also as it reentered the earth's atmosphere. It was designed to allow the astronaut inside to take over some of the controls. The body of the capsule would hold the astronaut himself, the life support system, and the spaceship's electrical system. The blunt end of the capsule was where the very important heat shield was located. At the opposite end were the parachutes that would be used on reentry. A modified Atlas rocket would boost Mercury 6 into space.

The spacecraft was ready. So was Glenn.

The countdown began at T - 390 minutes. At 6:06 in the morning, on February 20, Glenn boarded the spacecraft. There were a few minor delays to make last minute adjustments, but then the countdown continued. Finally they were down to the last few seconds before liftoff. Five, four, three, two, one -- Glenn was blasted into orbit. His successful flight orbited the earth three times. It reached a maximum altitude of 162 miles, and a maximum speed of 17,500 miles per hour. When it was time to reenter the earth's atmosphere, the astronauts had a scare. They thought that the heat shield was coming loose. Glenn saw chunks of material that might be part of the heat shield flying by the window of the capsule. In the final minutes of the flight, everyone was nervously waiting to see if he would be able to return home safely. They were all relieved to see the Mercury 6 capsule splash down in the Atlantic Ocean. After four hours and 55 minutes in space, John Glenn was home. Seventeen minutes after splashdown, the capsule was picked up by a US destroyer. After it was brought aboard ship, Glenn stepped out. He had returned safely!

John Glenn was a hero. His career had taken him into earth orbit and back.

However, Glenn didn't stop there. His popularity as a space hero helped him get elected to the US Senate. There the story of John Glenn began a new chapter.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



John Glenn

## Questions

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. John Glenn was \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. a fighter pilot  
B. an astronaut  
C. a senator  
D. all three
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. John Glenn was \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. the first man to orbit the earth  
B. the first American in space  
C. the first American to orbit the earth  
D. the first man to walk on the moon
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. In the second paragraph, the word mission means \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. a combat plane flight  
B. a homework assignment  
C. a secret assignment  
D. a space flight
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. In the fifth paragraph, the word mission means \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. a secret assignment  
B. a combat plane flight  
C. a homework assignment  
D. a space flight
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. This article is mainly about \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. John Glenn's work as a senator  
B. John Glenn's early life  
C. the Mercury space capsule  
D. John Glenn's career
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. John Glenn's career could be described as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. successful  
B. ambitious  
C. distinguished  
D. all of the above
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Which happened first?  
A. Glen orbited the earth in Mercury 6  
B. Glenn flew in WWII  
C. Glenn became senator  
D. Glenn flew in the Korean War
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. From this article, you can infer that \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. Glenn worked and studied hard  
B. Glenn was born in 1950  
C. Glenn didn't really want to fly planes  
D. Glenn was elected senator by only a few votes