

Apollo 8: The Mission That Changed Everything

Martin W. Sandler

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Apollo 8: The Mission That Changed Everything narrates the story of the historic Apollo 8 flight, the first manned space flight to orbit the Moon. Touching on key figures, like German-turned-NASA scientist Wernher von Braun and the crew members of the Apollo 8 flight, Sandler illustrates the immense research, preparation, and skill needed for this legendary flight.

Sandler splits the book into easy to follow sections. He begins with the historic context of this mission, describing the Cold War and Sputnik as motivations to the United States' space program. The next few sections tell the story of the flight itself, including the famous Earthrise photo taken from the Apollo 8 capsule. Unlike any previous flight, the Apollo 8 astronauts were able to do a live broadcast down to Earth, which was a sensation for all Americans.

I most enjoyed the focus Sandler put on the people involved the mission, including the designer of the Saturn V rocket Wernher von Braun, the three brave astronauts – Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders – and the manager of the Apollo Spacecraft Program George Low among many others. Sandler's book shows that the success of this mission was due to the contributions and support of many scientists, engineers, and even presidents.

To further this point, Sandler inserted mini stories into the narrative about topics like rocket science and the Russian space program. While these additions helped to contextualize the book, they disrupted the flow of read because they were not always placed at the end of a chapter or section. However, skipping over these sections and coming back to them once the whole chapter has been read is one way to preserve continuity in reading the story.

I would recommend this book to all teens because it is a well-told reminder of how amazing a feat the Apollo program was. For anyone interested in space science or history, this is a fantastic read.

Recommended Titles:

Moonbound: Apollo 11 and the Dream of Spaceflight by Jonathan Fetter-Vorm

The Astronomy Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained by Jacqueline Mitton et al.

Flying to the Moon: An Astronaut's Story by Michael Collins