The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon
by Bea Uusma Schyffert

It is 1969 and three Apollo 11 astronauts take off for the moon but one of them won’t ever walk on the moon. Michael Collins’s job is to navigate the command module, the Columbia, around the moon while Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong explore it in the lunar rover. Set up like a scrapbook, this biography includes Collins’s handwritten notes, descriptions, and thoughts to show his personal side and how he copes with being alone in the space capsule. Also provided are details about the two other astronauts, explanations, diagrams, and fascinating facts about what life is like in space.

Selected Awards
- Mildred L. Batchelder Honor Book
- Swedish Book Art Award
- Bank Street College Best Children’s Book

About the Author
Bea Uusma Schyffert is a Swedish artist and author. Translated from Swedish, The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon is the first book she has both illustrated and written. It has received several awards, including one from the 2002 International Book Art Competition that featured the best-designed books from around the world.
Think About What You Know

**Space** As evidenced by the experience of Michael Collins, space can be a lonely and silent place. To build students' basic understanding about how astronauts have to adjust to the environment in space:

- Have them brainstorm what they know about space and record details on a cluster.

- Then have students use *Student Journal, page 3* to describe how it might feel if they were out in space all alone.

Preview and Predict

Have students look at the front cover, read the title, and then read the summary on the back cover. Say:

- *Michael Collins is alone in space for days. What does he do all that time? What do you think he will say about his journey?*

Then point out The Exchange question on the title page: *What can you learn about yourself by being alone?* Explain that when they finish reading, they’ll share their ideas about this and other questions with a group.

Next, have students complete *Student Journal, page 3* to preview the book and make predictions about Michael Collins’s activities and feelings.

As students page through the book, point out the different features: photographs, charts, diagrams, notes, and illustrations. Explain that the images will give them even more details and interesting facts about the journey. Also mention that they can use the glossary at the back of the book to help them define unfamiliar space terms as they read.
Use a Reading Strategy

Main Idea and Details Chart

Preview the graphic organizer on Student Journal, page 4 with students. Explain that as they read The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon, they can complete the Chart to show why Michael Collins went to the far side of the moon. Have students add to their Charts after they finish reading each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Idea</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Collins is an astronaut with an important job.</td>
<td>6–13</td>
<td>He runs the capsule and waits for the other astronauts. He makes 850 computer commands and uses over 700 switches and keys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael takes off in the rocket with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on July 16, 1969.</td>
<td>14–25</td>
<td>This is the first time anyone tries to land on the moon. The rocket is the largest ever built—longer than a football field. Each astronaut has his job—Neil and Buzz will walk on the moon; Michael will circle around it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The astronauts must be very careful on the small ship.</td>
<td>26–37</td>
<td>They leave themselves notes telling how things should be done. They use checklists. They must keep the ship clean. They must fasten themselves in when sleeping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel is uncomfortable, but the men work and make it to the moon.</td>
<td>38–57</td>
<td>They must wear spacesuits. The spacecraft is cold and smells bad. Michael steers with rockets. Neil and Buzz do experiments on the moon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael never walks on the moon, but he gets to see the dark side of the moon.</td>
<td>58–64</td>
<td>Neil and Buzz land on the moon. Michael travels 70 miles above the far side of the moon. He orbits around the moon for 28 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The astronauts change when they return to Earth.</td>
<td>65–75</td>
<td>Michael quits being an astronaut and spends his time fishing. Buzz suffers from depression, but runs a space project company. Neil buys a dairy and teaches before retiring.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read the Book

Form the group that will read *The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon*. Plan how the group will read and respond. Some options are:

- **Read with a Group** Group members read an agreed-upon number of pages, complete the corresponding Student Journal page(s), and meet to discuss. When they finish the book, they meet again for The Exchange. The group can use the planner on Student Journal, page 2 to establish meeting times.

- **Read Independently** Group members read the book on their own and then meet for The Exchange. The group can use the planner on Student Journal, page 2 to establish the meeting time.

- **Guided Reading** Read aloud the summary at the beginning of each section to give students an overview of the section. Use the Before You Move On questions to check comprehension as students read. Use Look Ahead to set a focus for reading the next set of pages. At the end of each section, assign the appropriate Student Journal page. Discuss the page before starting the next section. Establish a date for The Exchange and record it on the planner.

Whichever option you choose, use pages 5–8 for an at-a-glance view of Student Journal pages, as well as answers to the Before You Move On questions.

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### Plan Your Schedule

My group members are: 

We plan to read *The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon* and meet on these dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Date We Will Finish Reading</th>
<th>Date We Will Discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Pages 6–25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Pages 26–37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Pages 38–57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Pages 58–75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our Exchange meeting will be on this date: 

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Section 1

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 13

1. Conclusions Why is Michael Collins on the other side of the moon when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walk on the moon?
   Because he must steer the capsule and wait for Armstrong and Aldrin.

2. Inference Reread page 9. Why does Michael Collins take a picture of himself, talk into a tape recorder, and say his children’s names?
   Because he feels alone and wants to remember those who are close to him.

PAGE 24

1. Sequence The story starts on the moon, but on page 16, the author tells about an event that took place earlier. What is it?
   The preparation for the launch of Michael’s rocket on July 16, 1969.

2. Viewing An assignment is a special job. Look at the charts on pages 17, 20, and 21. What assignment does each astronaut have?
   Collins is the navigator of the Columbia; Aldrin assists the commander; Armstrong is the commander

Respond to Pages 6–25

Main Idea and Details Chart
Think about what you read. Write two main ideas on your Chart on Journal page 4. Then write details about those ideas.

Think It Over
Think about what you have read, and write the answers to these questions.

1. Personal Response Imagine you have an assignment like the astronauts. Make a personal information chart like those on pages 17, 20, and 21.

2. Summarize Reread pages 7–12. Describe what Michael sees and hears on the far side of the moon. How does he feel?
   He sometimes cannot see anything and cannot use his radio. He hears the walls of his capsule squeak a little. He feels alone and thinks he is the only life on that side of the moon. He likes the feeling.

3. Use Text Features Look at the charts, letters, and pictures. Why is each of these important? Would you be able to understand this section without them? Why or why not?
   The charts, letters, and pictures provide important background about the story. The story could probably be understood, but it makes better sense with them.
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Section 2

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 31
1. Conclusions Why do the astronauts need so many lists? The lists are a result of years of training. They tell exactly how to do each job so that the men stay safe.

2. Confirm Word Meaning Reread step 1 on page 28. Look up orbit in the glossary on pages 76–77. What other words can you look up to understand this page better? command module, dock, lunar module, rocket, Apollo, service module

PAGE 37
1. Cause and Effect Reread page 34. Tell how the bodies of astronauts change in space. Why do they change? They become taller, their waists get smaller, and their faces look puffy. They change because they are weightless.

2. Inference Reread page 37. Why do you think the astronauts cannot sleep? They’re so excited about seeing the moon.

Section 3

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 49
1. Cause and Effect Reread page 44. At first the capsule air smells very clean. Then it starts to smell bad. Why does it change? Sweat and urine smells hang in the air.

2. Fact and Opinion Reread the description by Michael Collins on page 46. What are the facts and what is opinion? fact: the description of the moon in the first paragraph opinion: it was a totally different moon and it didn’t seem friendly

PAGE 57
1. Cause and Effect Buzz Aldrin was going to be the first man on the moon. Reread page 52. What happened? Buzz had trouble getting out of the lunar module in practice, so Neil had to go first.

2. Inference Why can’t the astronauts smell the moon until they are back in the module? They cannot take off their helmets and smell the air until they are back in the lunar module.
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**Section 4**

**ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”**

**PAGE 64**

1. **Comparisons** Read the Food Pack chart on page 65. How is food in space different from food on Earth? How is it the same?
   The food does not look like food on Earth. They have to put water into some of the food and squeeze it into their mouths. They eat many of the same foods that are eaten on Earth.

2. **Conclusions** Reread page 60. What tells you how Michael felt about not walking on the moon?
   His responses to others and his thoughts show his feelings. He said he felt 99 percent of the trip was good enough. But he also knew he didn’t have the best seat.

**PAGE 75**

1. **Inference** The men are quarantined to make sure they have no deadly germs. What is another benefit of the quarantine?
   They have time to write reports, think about what they have experienced, and see the take-off on video.

2. **Conclusions** Reread page 73. What does Michael learn about himself after he comes back to Earth?
   He discovers that he never wants to travel to space again, because he loves Earth more than the moon.

**Respond to Pages 58–75**

**Main Idea and Details Chart**

Complete the last two sections of your Main Idea and Details Chart on Journal page 4.

**Think It Over**

Think about what you have read so far, and write the answers to these questions.

1. **Personal Response** Michael Collins writes notes as he travels to the moon. Imagine that you are circling around the moon. Write a note to your friends.

2. **Judgments** Michael Collins has to do his work alone—sometimes even with no contact with Earth. Why would this be difficult? From what you read about Michael, do you think he is a good person for the job? Why or why not?

3. **Comparisons** Think about all of the astronauts’ experiences on their trip to the moon. How are Neil and Buzz’s trips similar to and different from Michael’s trip?
   They all are traveling in space. They all get closer to the moon. They all work with instruments. Michael controls the craft. The other two men walk on the moon. Michael is alone for a lot of the journey.
Allow time for groups to meet for The Exchange. If you plan to participate, use these tips for guiding students in discussing the big question:

What can you learn about yourself by being alone?

How would Michael Collins answer this question?
He learns that he often enjoys the feeling of being alone. He feels confident, satisfied, and excited. He also has time to think about what is important to him, such as his family and the other astronauts.

There are many times when Michael Collins feels alone but he finds ways to enjoy the experience. Name as many as you can. Then tell about a time you felt alone. What did you like and dislike about it?
He takes pictures of his stubbled face, talks into a tape recorder, and thinks about his family. He also writes his feelings in a journal, admires the scene outside, and concentrates on doing his job.

What if Michael Collins had never joined the mission to the moon? Talk about how this could have affected the trip. Then tell about a time you did something by yourself to help others.
Michael Collins was very well-trained and prepared to do his job. Without him, the mission might not have been successful.

Extend the Reading

Write a Sketch
Encourage students to collect, review, and summarize the most interesting facts and details about Michael Collins’s life. After organizing the details, have them write one or two paragraphs for their sketches.

Space Talk
Have students imagine that Michael Collins does have radio communication with Earth and can talk to his family. Have them use the personal information they learned about him to make up a conversation between Collins and his family as he floats through space.

Do You Want the Job?
Groups can research requirements for astronauts and how they train. Using their notes from sources such as encyclopedias, space books, or the Internet, they can create a career poster or job announcement that lists key qualities necessary for the job.