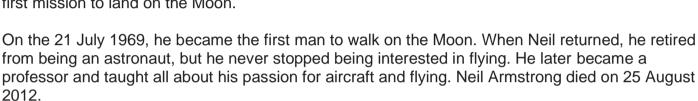# Who was Neil Armstrong?

Neil Armstrong fell in love with flying when his father took him for a ride in an aeroplane when he was six-years-old. As a boy, he loved to read about flying and he built model planes. Neil got his pilot's licence when he was just 15, before he could even drive a car.

Before he became an astronaut, Neil flew fighter planes for the navy and later tested experimental rocket-powered planes. It was an incredibly dangerous job, but Neil always proved calm under pressure. This got him noticed by NASA and Neil was selected as the Commander of the first mission to land on the Moon.

On the 21 July 1969, he became the first man to walk on the Moon. When Neil returned, he retired from being an astronaut, but he never stopped being interested in flying. He later became a professor and taught all about his passion for aircraft and flying. Neil Armstrong died on 25 August 2012.

Mission to the Moon

On July 16 1969, after a breakfast of steak and eggs, Neil Armstrong and his crew mates, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins, blasted off on their mission to land on the Moon.

Their Saturn V rocket was the most powerful machine ever built. It was 110 metres tall and had as much power as a nuclear bomb.

After launch, it took four days to travel over 200,000 miles to the Moon. When they arrived, the spacecraft split into the command module (which stayed in space orbiting the moon) and the lunar module (which went to the moon). Neil's job was to fly the lunar module called Eagle and land it safely. It was incredibly risky; however, with just 40 seconds of fuel left, Neil reported back "the Eagle has landed".

Neil and Buzz then opened the hatch and climbed out. Back on Earth, more than 600 million people watched on television, waiting to hear what Neil would say:

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Neil and Buzz spent nearly three hours walking on the Moon. They did some important scientific experiments, collected pieces of moon rock to bring back to Earth and took lots of photographs.

When it was time for them to return, Neil and Buzz left the surface and got back in the lunar module to rejoin Michael Collins who had been orbiting the Moon in a separate module. All three then made the journey back to Earth, before safely splashing down in the Pacific Ocean. Mission complete!