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Opening extract from

A Journey Through: Space

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Let's begin our journey...

Have you ever looked up at the night sky and wondered what it would be like to zoom through space? It's so far away, but there are so many amazing sights to see...



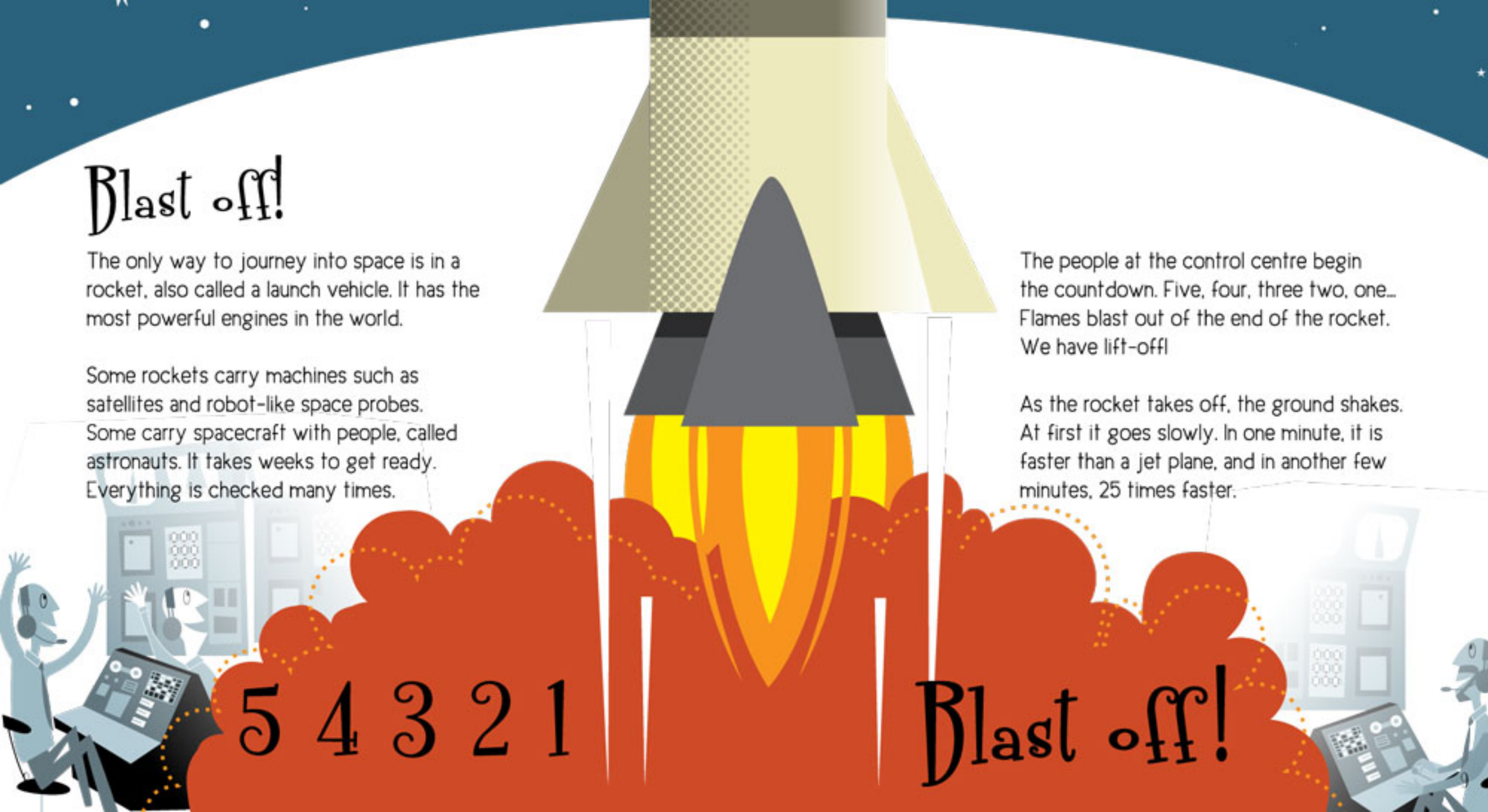
Blast off!

The only way to journey into space is in a rocket, also called a launch vehicle. It has the most powerful engines in the world.

Some rockets carry machines such as satellites and robot-like space probes. Some carry spacecraft with people, called astronauts. It takes weeks to get ready. Everything is checked many times.

The people at the control centre begin the countdown. Five, four, three two, one... Flames blast out of the end of the rocket. We have lift-off!

As the rocket takes off, the ground shakes. At first it goes slowly. In one minute, it is faster than a jet plane, and in another few minutes, 25 times faster.



The Sun

Stars are huge space objects that give out light and heat. Looking up from Earth at night time, the dark sky twinkles with thousands of distant stars.

Looking up by day, there is one star that is very near, bright and hot. It is a giant ball of flames and fire – the Sun.



The Sun could fit more than one million Earths inside. At the surface it is 6,000 degrees C, which is 25 times hotter than a home oven.

Massive flames leap up from the Sun's surface, curl around and back in. Slightly darker, cooler patches are known as sunspots. Most last only a few days.

Across the Universe

The Universe is all of space, and everything in it – planets, stars, galaxies, black holes and the rest.

No one really knows the shape or size of the Universe. It could be round like a ball, curved like a dome, or ring-shaped. Some space experts think it is flat – like a sandwich!

The Universe started 13,800 million years ago. At first it was a tiny spot with everything squeezed into it.

Then BOOM! – the Big Bang. The Universe started to get bigger. Stars and other space objects formed. The Universe is still getting bigger today. It will probably keep growing for millions of years, maybe even forever.

