THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF

KATHERINE JOHNSON

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Written by Devika Jina
Illustrated by Maggie Cole

EXTRAORDINARY LIVES
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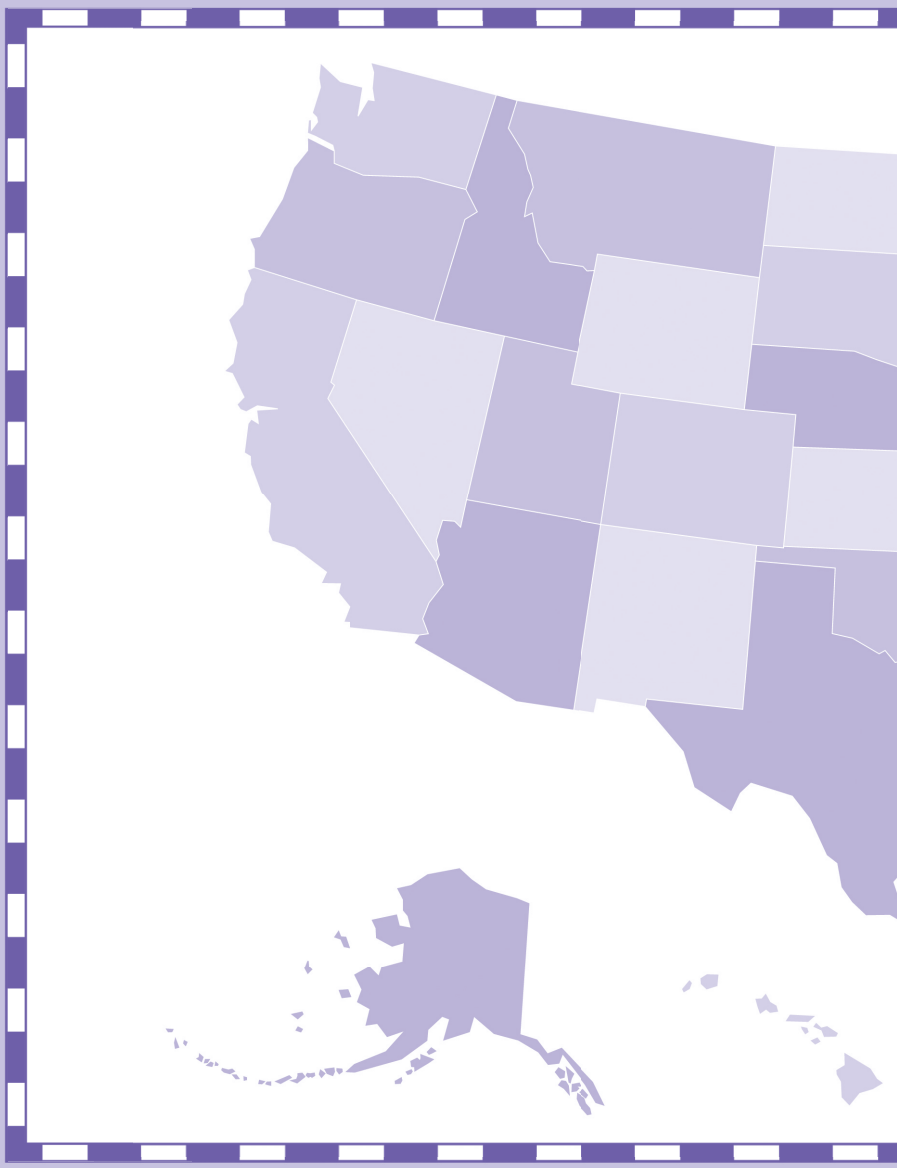

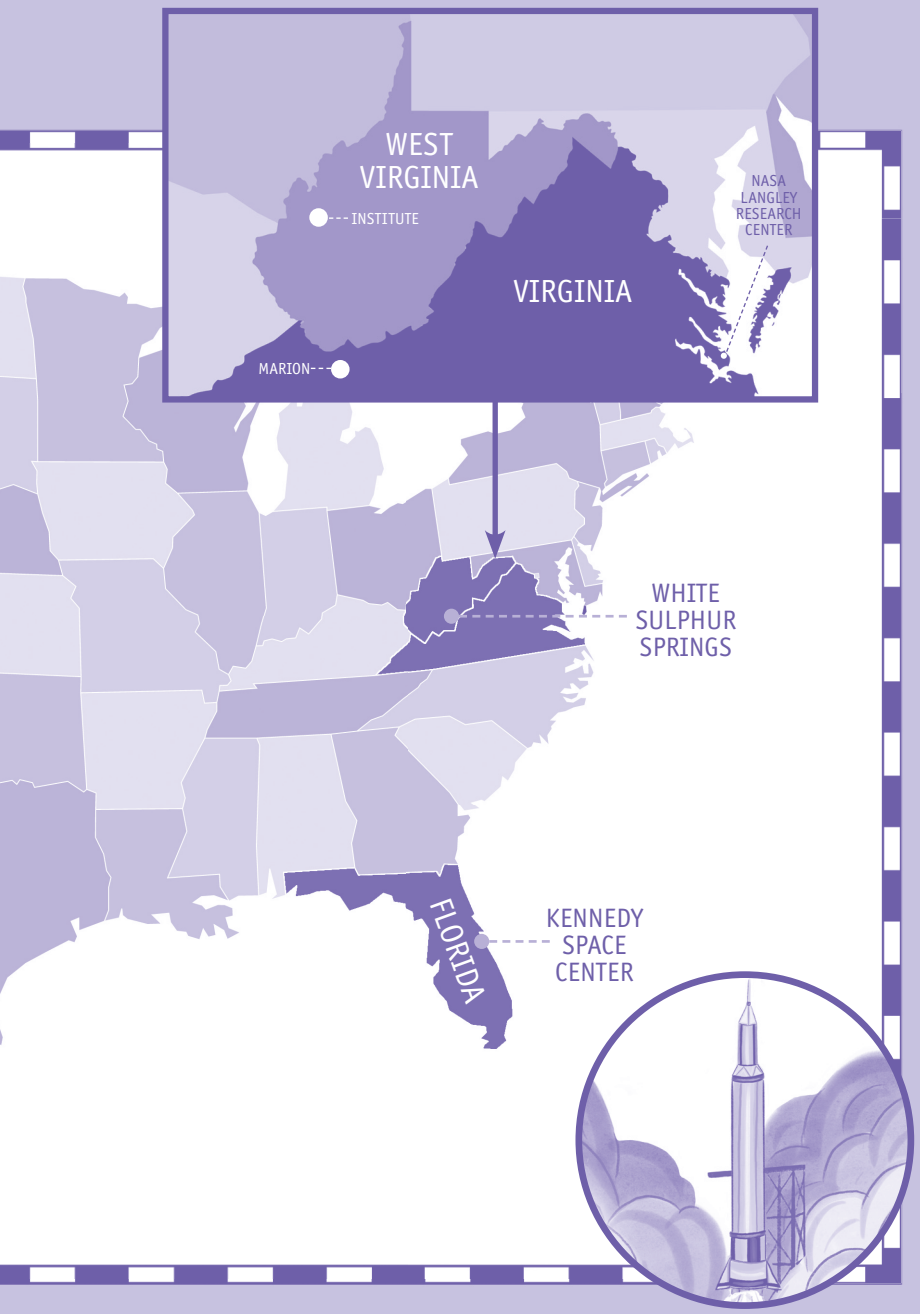
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Who is
Katherine
Johnson?

Katherine Johnson

was born on 26 August 1918 in White Sulphur Springs in the state of West Virginia, America.

Katherine was ***talented*** beyond her years. She started high school at just ten years old (three years earlier than normal) and she ***graduated*** from college (university) at eighteen. Katherine achieved great things from a very young age, and at a time when few black people had the opportunity to gain a high-school diploma.

In 1953 Katherine started working at the Langley Research Center, which was part of what we now know as NASA. Here, Katherine was hired to work out complicated ***mathematical problems***. Katherine aced this, and after only two weeks she was ***promoted*** to work on a new project where she discovered how planes and other aircraft move in the sky.

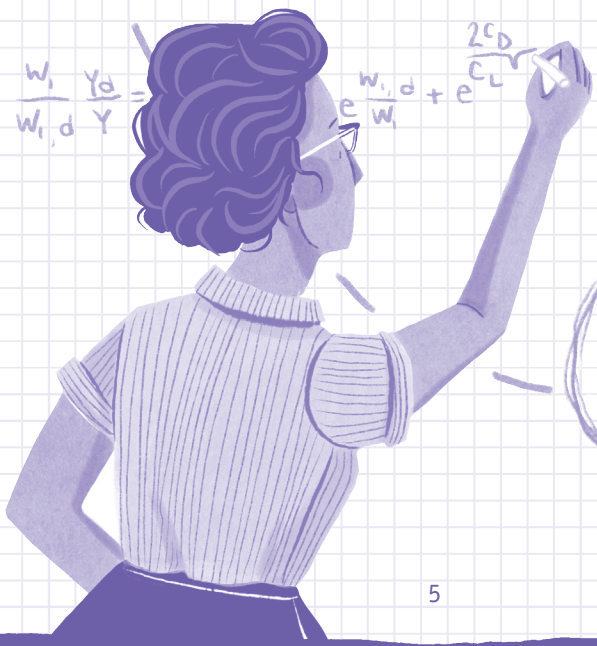
NASA:
the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the US space agency. America's interest in space travel began in 1955, with the race against Russia to become the first country to send a person to space.

When America started competing with the USSR at ***space travel***, Katherine showed how much she could accomplish.

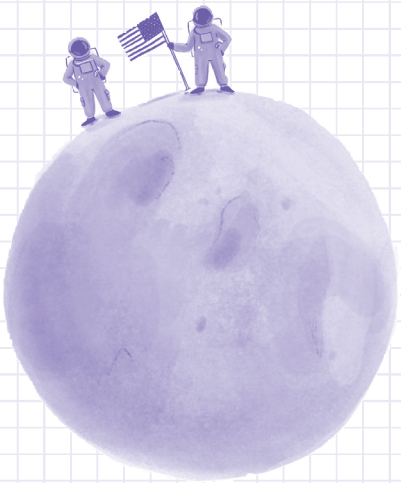
USSR:
the name Russia used to be known by. America and the USSR both wanted to be the first country to send humans into space. USSR stands for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In 1961 an astronaut named ***Alan Shepard*** became the first American in space, but it was Katherine's ***calculations*** that got him there.

Katherine worked out the TRAJECTORY he would need to follow in order to get to space and arrive home safely.



TRAJECTORY: path and direction.



Katherine continued to calculate the maths behind space missions, even after NASA started using ***electronic computers***.

Katherine was no ordinary maths whizz, so she wasn't done shining just yet. Eight years later, in 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to ***walk on the moon***, but Katherine was the woman who got them there and back.

Did you know?

Project Apollo was the spaceflight programme that landed the first humans on the moon.

'I FELT
most proud
on the success
OF THE
Apollo
MISSION.'

Katherine has achieved so much in her life, never letting anything prevent her from learning, working and ***discovering***.

The little girl who loved to count grew up to become the woman who sent people travelling to space, proving that if we work hard enough, we can ***reach for the stars***.