

A Reader's Theatre adaptation of Catherine Thimmesh's
Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon

By Dixie Allen
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Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon by Catherine Thimmesh. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. All non-amateur performances must be secured in writing from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

Approximately 7 Minutes

Readers

Narrator	President Kennedy
Astronaut	Lunar Module Employee (LEM 1, 2, 3) Kennedy Space Employee (KSC 1, 2, 3) Mission Control Employee (MC 1, 2, 3)

The number of performers can be reduced to just 6 if the sets of employees are acted by the same set of 3 performers. The different characters can be identified either through a sign they wear, a sign that is on the back of their scripts so the audience can see, or even the wearing of different "hats" (Lunar Module Employees might have a lab coat, the Kennedy Space Employees might wear a hard hat, a space helmet for the astronaut, and so forth) to signify their role. The possibilities are endless.

Narrator: This scene is taken from *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon* by Catherine Thimmesh. We open with words from President Kennedy.

President Kennedy: "I believe this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth."

Narrator: It was mind-boggling. The television itself had been a flat-out miracle. And now, that technological wonder of wonders would very soon transmit pictures of a man, on the moon!

Astronaut: "All this is possible only through the blood, sweat, and tears of a number of people...All you see [are] the three of us, but beneath the surface are thousands of others."

LEM 1: There were 7,500 of us. We designed, developed, and built the lunar module, christened *Eagle* for *Apollo 11*, from the ground up.

LEM 2: There was no such thing as a random failure. We eliminated them one by one.

Astronaut: Our lives depended on it.

LEM 3: It was OUR baby. It was OUR handiwork. It was eight years of OUR lives

LEM 1: And soon, very soon, it was going to land on that giant glowing ball in space.

LEM 2: Space, it's dangerous out there. "In designing the command module, the one thing we had to be sure of was that we could keep the crew alive."

Astronaut: And we appreciated that.

Narrator: To help keep the crew alive required 14,000 other folks at North American Rockwell and a hodgepodge of 8 thousand other companies who worked on the command module itself. Could their command module keep the crew alive?

Astronaut: I think that's a perfectly good question.

Narrator: Launch operators at Kennedy Space Center in Florida was its own little town.

KSC 1: There were seventeen thousand of us at the Kennedy Space Center: engineers, technicians, mechanics, contractors, and managers. All of us were needed to pull together a launch.

All: Whew!

KSC 2: Check, check, check, test, stack the 3 rocket stages, roll it out, check and recheck, fuel it, and ready it for liftoff.

All: Whew!

KSC 1: We even did a Countdown Demonstration Test!

All: Whew!

Narrator: And then it was time. July 16, 1969, they were ready.

LEM All: We were ready.

KSC All: We were ready.

Astronaut: We were ready.

Narrator: The world watched when at 9:32 A.M...

All: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Blastoff!

Narrator: Apollo 11 rocketed to the moon after orbiting the earth. When they got to the moon, they began circling and studying the moon for 12 revolutions. On the 13th orbit the *Eagle* undocked from *Columbia* and prepared to descend to the lunar surface.

Astronaut: “The Eagle has wings.”

Narrator: Mission Control waited, and watched, and monitored the controls.

MC 1: “You are Go for PD!

(aside to the audience)

MC 2: That means “Powered Descent Ignition”.

Narrator: In twelve minutes the astronauts would be on the surface of the moon. (Pause) Oh no, suddenly alarms are raised.

MC 3: BAM! We’re told it’s a twelve-oh-two! (aside: which means trouble).

Astronaut: We have a problem! What is it? Do we land? Do we abort? Are we in danger? Are we blowing up? Tell us what to do. Hurry!

Narrator: Challenge number 1: Suddenly the people at Mission Control went into a flurry of activity.

MC 1: Searching.

MC 2: Sifting.

MC 3: Sorting.

MC 1: Plucking.

MC 2: Juggling.

MC 3: Judging.

Narrator: And finally they were told to go ahead with the landing.

Mission Control All: We are Go on that alarm.

Narrator: Then the alarm sounded again. Challenge number 2.

MC 2: They're almost out of fuel.

MC 3: It's taking too long to land.

MC 1: We held our breaths!

Narrator: Click! The astronauts had landed on the moon.

All: Whew!

Narrator: Challenge number 3. The temperature in a fuel line started to rise.

MC 3: From table to table, rushing.

MC 1: Telephones, dialing.

MC 2: Telephones, ringing.

Narrator: Suddenly, though, just as the procedure was about to be relayed to solve the problem, the temperature dropped! And it stayed down. The frozen slug had melted.

All: Whew!

Narrator: It was finally time to walk on the moon. Roughly 500 people worked on the space suit alone to make that possible. And just what would happen when Neil Armstrong, the commander, put his feet on the surface of the moon? Nevertheless, the time had come for him to take that first step on the Moon.

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

Narrator: And the world went...

All: Whew!