



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 6

Name: _____

Date: _____

Two Paths to the Moon: Robotic vs. Human Space Exploration

The Case for Robotic Missions

Robotic spacecraft have explored the Moon, Mars, and even the outer planets without ever needing to bring a single astronaut home safely. Robots do not require oxygen, food, or protection from radiation, which makes them dramatically cheaper and less risky to send into space. A robotic mission can also stay in space for years, or even decades, far longer than any human body could survive the trip.

The Case for Human Missions

Despite these advantages, human astronauts bring something robots still cannot fully replicate: adaptable, real-time judgment. When Apollo astronauts encountered unexpected problems on the lunar surface, they could improvise solutions immediately, using creativity and hands-on problem-solving no pre-programmed robot could match. Human missions also inspire public interest and scientific curiosity in ways that robotic missions, however successful, often do not achieve to the same degree.

Where the Two Approaches Actually Meet

In practice, modern space agencies rarely treat this as an either-or choice. Robotic missions are frequently sent ahead of human missions to scout for hazards, test technology, and gather data that keeps future astronauts safer. Robots and humans increasingly work as a team, with each approach compensating for what the other cannot do alone.

What the Future Might Hold

As technology improves, the line between robotic and human exploration may blur even further. Advanced robots controlled remotely by astronauts orbiting nearby, rather than working alone or requiring astronauts to land directly, could combine the safety of robotic missions with the adaptable judgment of human decision-making, suggesting that the real future of exploration may not be robots versus humans, but robots and humans

working closely together.

Circle the Correct Answer

1. According to the passage, what is one clear advantage of robotic missions?

- a) They can stay in space for years without needing food or oxygen
- b) They are always more scientifically valuable than human missions
- c) They are less expensive to build than any spacecraft

2. What advantage do human astronauts have over robots, according to the passage?

- a) They require less funding overall
- b) They can improvise and make real-time judgment calls
- c) They can survive in space indefinitely

3. How are robotic and human missions often used together, according to the passage?

- a) Robotic missions scout ahead to gather data and reduce risk for later human missions
- b) They are never combined in real space programs
- c) Human missions always happen before any robotic mission

4. What does the passage suggest about the future of space exploration?

- a) Robots will completely replace human astronauts
- b) Robots and humans may work even more closely together
- c) Space exploration will likely stop entirely

True or False

5. The passage argues that human missions are always better than robotic missions.

6. Robotic spacecraft do not require oxygen or food. _____

7. Apollo astronauts were able to improvise solutions to unexpected problems.

Fill in the Blank

8. Human missions inspire public interest and scientific _____ in ways robotic missions often do not.

9. The passage suggests the future may involve robots and humans working closely _____.

Think and Explain

10. This passage uses a compare and contrast structure. Identify two specific points of comparison between robotic and human missions that the passage discusses, and explain how organizing the passage this way helps the reader understand the topic.

11. Does this passage take a side, arguing that one approach (robotic or human) is better overall? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
