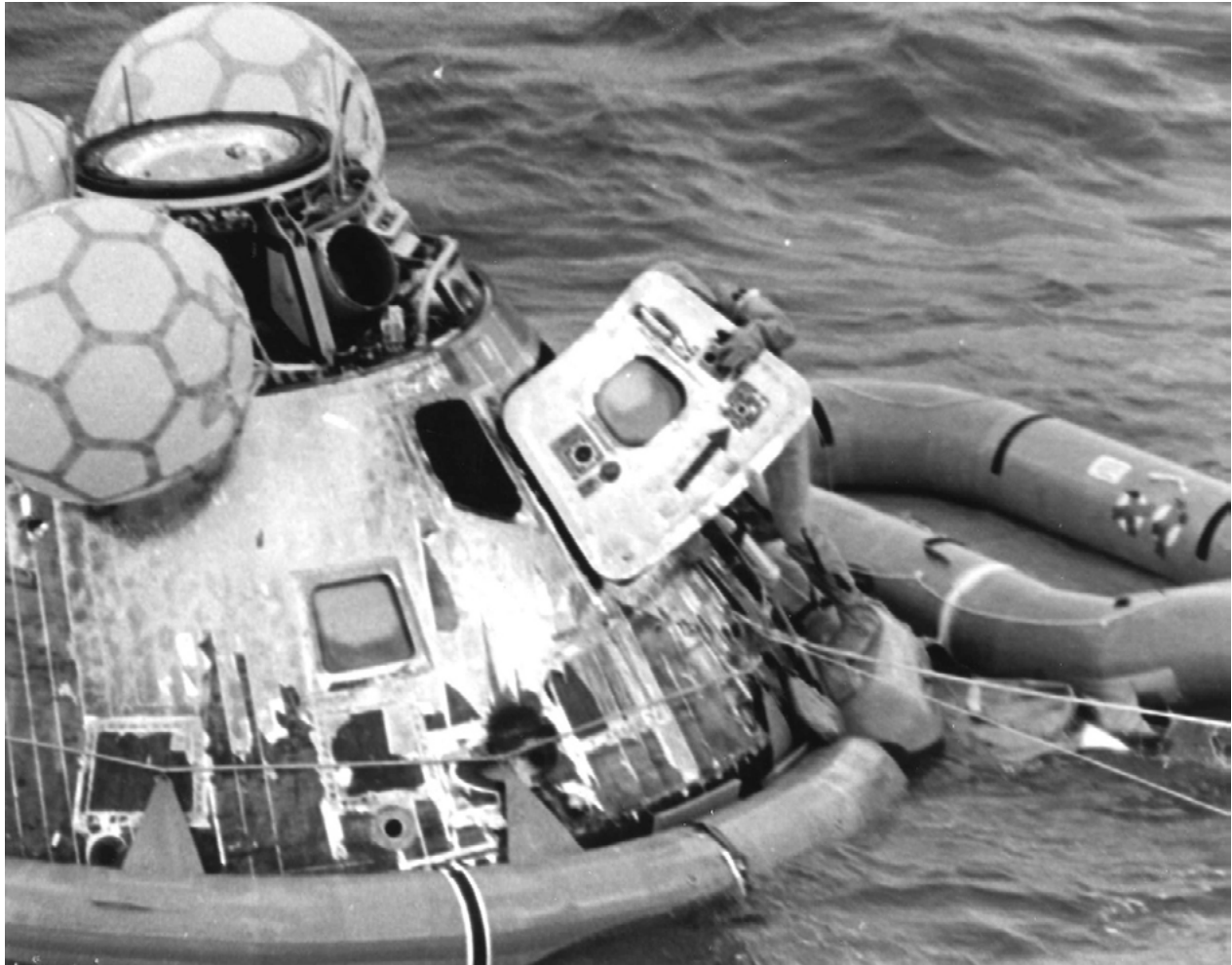




Apollo 11 and the Space Race: Student Packet



A swimmer from Underwater Demolition Team 11 opens the hatch of the Apollo 11 Command Module following splashdown on July 24, 1969 (NHHC photograph).

Essential Question

- ✿ How and why did the U.S. Navy help reporters to cover the return of Apollo 11 from the moon?

Student Packet:

Apollo 11 and the Space Race

Context

USS *Hornet* and the Mission to Rescue Apollo 11's Astronauts

Apollo 11 was the name given to the mission that put the first two human beings on the moon, in July 1969. For Apollo 11's return to Earth, the U.S. Navy was in charge of recovering the spacecraft and rescuing the astronauts once they splashed down in the Pacific Ocean.

For this recovery mission, as it related to the astronauts, the stakes were quite high. Even a slight deviation from the plan and the course for reentry into Earth's atmosphere would mean that the astronauts might arrive thousands of miles from rescue crews. USS *Hornet*, an aircraft carrier, housed hundreds of people tasked with making sure that the astronauts survived—including the Navy's very best swimmers, who would have to position and inflate the rafts that were to carry the astronauts from their sinking capsule. Helicopters would take the astronauts and swimmers to *Hornet* to meet the President and other dignitaries.

Also on board *Hornet* were at least 70 members of the press, who documented the event and communicated their stories in real time to news agencies all over the world.

Apollo 11, the Press, and the Cold War

The press coverage of the mission, including the recovery operation, followed on nearly a decade of hope and anxiety around the "space race," the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in space exploration and, by logical extension, rocket and missile technologies. This competition happened in the context of interest around the globe in the progression of the Cold War: Which of the world's two superpowers would prevail? An accomplishment as great as a successful crewed mission to the moon would confirm the U.S. advantage in the space race and in the Cold War more generally.



President Richard M. Nixon watches the recovery of Apollo 11 from the bridge of USS *Hornet* (CVS-12). Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet, is on the right, and Henry Kissinger, National Security Advisor, is on the left (NHHC photograph).

Relevant Dates

Relevant Milestones in the Space Race

1955	The Soviet Union launches the first satellite into space.
1957	The Soviet Union becomes the first to put a satellite into Earth orbit and also launches the first living organism into Earth orbit (a dog named Laika).
1958	The United States launches its first Earth-orbiting satellite and founds NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration).
1959	The United States launches the first weather satellite, which transmits the first pictures of Earth from space. The Soviet Union launches a satellite that reaches the surface of the moon.
1961	The Soviet Union sends the first human being into space.
1962	President John F. Kennedy calls on NASA to send a human being to the moon and back before 1970.
1964	The United States launches the first satellite to reach Mars. (The satellite would arrive in 1965 and transmit photographs of the surface of Mars back to the United States.)
1965	The Soviet Union accomplishes the first spacewalk (an astronaut in a spacesuit leaving the spacecraft).
1967	Three American astronauts die as a result of a fire in their capsule. One of their Soviet counterparts dies a few months later, when his capsule's parachute malfunctions.
1968	The United States sends the first human-crewed spacecraft to the vicinity of the moon. (The crew does not reach the surface of the moon, however.)
1969	The United States sends Apollo 11 to the surface of the moon and back. The landing is broadcast on television to an audience of more than 600 million people.

Source 1. Excerpt from a Summary Report by the Manned Spacecraft Recovery Office, U.S. Navy (Task Force 130), 1969

About This Source

<i>Who wrote this?</i>	Navy officers
<i>What is it?</i>	a short report on the activities of Task Force 130, the organization of vessels, aircraft, and offices in charge of recovering spacecraft and rescuing astronauts
<i>Where was it written?</i>	unknown
<i>When was it written?</i>	1969
<i>Why was it written?</i>	to document the work of Task Force 130

Apollo 11 was the first lunar landing mission. Apollo 11 was launched on 16 July 1969. Task Force 130 participation in the Apollo 11 mission consisted of planning for and executing the location and retrieval of the astronauts and command module for a landing in the Pacific Command Area. Task Force 130 was ready in all respects to accomplish the mission. Forces assigned included USS *Hornet* (CVS-12), USS *Goldsborough* (DDG-20), Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Four (with eight SH-3D helicopters), Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron III Detachment 12 (with four E-1B aircraft), two C-1As from Fleet Tactical Support Squadron Thirty, personnel from Underwater Demolition Teams Eleven and Twelve, Air Force HC-130s and pararescue teams assigned by 41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Wing, two US-2C aircraft from Fleet Composite Squadron One, and one WC-121 aircraft from Airborne Early Warning Squadron One. The Public Affairs Office supervised the embarkation of 118 civilians, including 70 newsmen and technicians, on the prime recovery ship, *Hornet*. In addition, the Public Affairs Office provided one officer and one enlisted representative aboard *Hornet*. *Hornet* deployed from Pearl Harbor to the abort station along the Mid-Pacific recovery line and then to the end-of-mission target point.¹



A helicopter from HS-4 picks up the astronauts from the Apollo 11 Command Module following splashdown on July 24, 1969 (NHHC photograph).

1. Source: Report, Manned Spacecraft Recovery Office, U.S. Navy (Task Force 130), 1969, available for download at <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/archives/digitized-collections/apollo-11/reports.html>

Source 1. (continued)

Glossary

Pacific Command Area

the Pacific Ocean and adjacent seas

USS *Hornet* (CVS-12)

a World War II-era aircraft carrier with identification number (“hull number”) CVS-12

USS *Goldsborough* (DDG-20)

a Cold War-era destroyer (fast, maneuverable ship) with hull number DDG-20

squadron

a group of U.S. Navy vessels or aircraft

SH-3D helicopter

short for Sikorsky SH-3 Sea King, a U.S. Navy helicopter capable of water landings

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron

a group of U.S. Navy airplanes equipped with radar and communications equipment

E-1B aircraft

a type of airplane equipped with radar and communications equipment

C-1As

a type of airplane used to deliver supplies and people to aircraft carriers

Fleet Tactical Support Squadron Thirty

a group of aircraft used to deliver supplies and people to aircraft carriers

Underwater Demolition Teams Eleven and Twelve

two groups of highly skilled U.S. Navy swimmers

Air Force HC-130s

short for Lockheed HC-130s, large airplanes belonging to the U.S. Air Force, used for search and rescue operations

pararescue teams

groups of people trained to jump from aircraft, deploy their parachutes, and give assistance to people on the ground or in the water

41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Wing

groups trained to rescue astronauts upon their return to Earth

US-2C aircraft

a U.S. Navy airplane designed to land on water or land

Fleet Composite Squadron One

a group of U.S. Navy aircraft

Public Affairs Office

a group of people in charge of communicating with the public (and news media) about U.S. Navy activities

newsmen

Sexist language such as this was common in 1969. Now, U.S. Navy reports would use words such as journalist, news media, or media.

technicians

broadcast technicians (radio, television, telecommunications)

enlisted representative

a U.S. Navy Sailor who is not an officer

deployed

departed for a specific mission

abort station

the place or point at which the mission might be terminated early, should the need arise

Mid-Pacific recovery line

the path along which the spacecraft might land, given any number of variables

end-of-mission target point

the spot at which the spacecraft was expected to splash down

Source 2. Excerpt from a Cruise Report, USS *Hornet*, 1969

About This Source

<i>Who wrote this?</i>	U.S. naval officers
<i>What is it?</i>	a report on the activities aboard USS <i>Hornet</i> during the Apollo 11 recovery operation
<i>Where was it written?</i>	aboard USS <i>Hornet</i>
<i>When was it written?</i>	1969
<i>Why was it written?</i>	to document the work of people aboard USS <i>Hornet</i> during the Apollo 11 recovery operation

Working spaces for the press consisted of:

- a. Press Center (Flag Operations Office)
- b. Press Briefing Room (War Room)
- c. Teletype Room (Debriefing Room)

All three were located on the centerline passageway of the O2 level. They were air conditioned, spacious and adjacent to one another. They were also adjacent to Ready Room One from where HS-4 and UTD 11 and 12 were operating. Consequently, coordination was simplified by the mere physical proximity of the spaces to one another as well as to the wardroom, flight deck, bridge, and living quarters.

The coordinating of helicopter flights for writers, commentator and photographers was initially handled by the HS-4 PAO.

Press briefings were conducted twice daily, at 0800 and 1600. The navigator and meteorologist made routine reports while the Captain made himself available at nearly every briefing, as operations permitted. Guest speakers included:

- HS-4 Commanding Officer
- NASA Team Leader
- First Lieutenant
- MQF Engineer
- NASA Medical Group Leader
- UDT Officer in Charge
- Air Officer
- plus other NASA technical personnel

Press copy transmission was handled by Western Union International (WUI). WUI transmitted on seven teletype channels with the capability of utilizing twelve. Transmissions occurred twice daily from 1000–1100 and 1900–2000. On splashdown day, transmission was continuous. Copies were assembled in the Press Center and assigned priorities on a first-come, first-served basis. Then, a cover sheet was attached and the copy was carried to

the teletype space. No difficulties were experienced and news was transmitted expeditiously and accurately without involving Navy Communications systems in any way.

Equipment support for press personnel included typewriters and rental of a copy machine.

Glossary

Flag Operations Office

staff office for the senior-most Navy officer on board

War Room

a meeting and workspace for senior officers

Debriefing Room

a meeting room

centerline passageway

a corridor running lengthwise down the center of a ship

02 level

an upper deck on an aircraft carrier

Ready Room

a waiting room for on-duty pilots

HS-4

short for Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Four

UDT 11 and 12

short for Underwater Demolition Teams Eleven and Twelve

wardroom

officers' lounge and dining area

flight deck

uppermost deck, the surface on which aircraft take off and land

bridge

an elevated structure on board the ship, containing the control room(s)

PAO

Public Affairs Officer

0800 and 1600

military time, 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

MQF

Mobile Quarantine Facility, the trailer in which the astronauts would be kept for three weeks after their return from the moon

Air Officer

the Navy officer in charge of all aircraft and air operations for the carrier

copy

prose, such as an article or a script for a radio broadcast, written by a journalist

Western Union International (WUI)

the leading company for worldwide telecommunications in 1969

teletype

a printer-typewriter apparatus used to send and receive messages between two points on the globe, in this case via radio waves

1000–1100

military time, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

1900–2000

military time, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

splashdown

the moment a spacecraft lands in water

Name _____ Date _____

Worksheet (Formative Assessment)

Directions: Write your answers in complete sentences.

1. From **Source 1**, extrapolate the events that journalists might want to report on as part of their coverage of the Apollo 11 rescue operation.

2. Give at least three short quotes from **Source 2** that might support the idea that press coverage was a very important part of the Apollo 11 rescue mission.

3. According to **Source 2**, how did the crew of USS *Hornet* avoid having to handle the communications between journalists and their editors back home? What might be the advantages and disadvantages to the Navy's solution?

Name _____ Date _____

Homework (Summative Assessment)

Directions:

In 1969, the United States and Russia (then a part of the Soviet Union) were on bad terms. Many Americans and Russians viewed each other as enemies. Moreover, the Soviet Union tried hard to control Russians' access to media from the United States. Why, then, did Voice of America, a U.S.-government agency, transmit Russian-language news about Apollo 11 from USS *Hornet* into Russia?

Extension Exercise

The full version of **Source 1** reports the following:

“The Voice of America live Russian broadcast covering the Apollo 11 splashdown was also provided by Western Union International.”

Voice of America was a media agency owned and operated by the U.S. government, broadcasting in several languages throughout the world.

Directions:

Write a five-paragraph essay answering the question, *Why was it so important to the U.S. military and U.S. government that the return of Apollo 11 be documented in media throughout the world?*

Be sure to support your argument by using examples from at one of the sources above, as well as examples from your textbook and/or other assigned readings that touch on the 1960s and the Cold War.

Limit your response to three pages, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12.