

# Mae Jemison: The First African American Woman in Space

Mae Jemison was born on October 17, 1956 in Alabama, but she grew up in Chicago, Illinois. By the time she was in kindergarten, she already knew she wanted to be a scientist. As she grew up, she saw both scientific and social progress throughout the 1960s. She watched NASA launch rockets and astronauts into space. The Civil Rights movement taught Mae that she had unlimited potential, especially as a young African American woman.

She asked questions about everything. Her parents supported her curiosity by always giving her the same answer: look it up yourself. Mae learned to love to read. She also loved dancing and was inspired by science fiction and comics.

Mae graduated high school at just 16 years old, then began college at Stanford University and earned degrees in Chemical Engineering and African American Studies. She studied medicine all over the world, including Cuba, Cambodia, and Kenya. She earned her doctorate in New York, and traveled to West Africa as a

member of the Peace Corps. But Mae, now known as Dr. Jemison, never forgot her childhood dream of becoming a scientist.

NASA began looking for new astronauts. Dr. Jemison applied, along with more than 2,000 other hopeful applicants. In 1987, she became one of only 15 people selected to join NASA and become astronauts. Dr. Jemison was the first African American astronaut ever. She moved to Texas, where she trained hard to prepare for her trip to space.



*Dr. Mae Jemison wearing her astronaut gear in 1992 before travelling to space.*

Dr. Jemison became the first African American woman in space on September 12, 1992. She was a Science Mission Specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavor. The mission,



*The patch from the STS-47 mission. It shows the Endeavor Space shuttle and the last names of the crewmembers.*

called STS-47, was a collaboration between the United States and Japan. Dr. Jemison and her fellow crew used equipment aboard the space shuttle to study how zero gravity affects life. She spent almost eight days in space and orbited the Earth 127 times.

After Dr. Jemison returned to Earth, she retired from NASA. She founded programs to encourage scientific development, taught classes about how to protect the Earth, became the first astronaut to appear in an episode of *Star Trek*, and gave many speeches about her experience. Today, she continues to encourage future scientists and show young people that anything is possible if you work hard and trust your abilities.

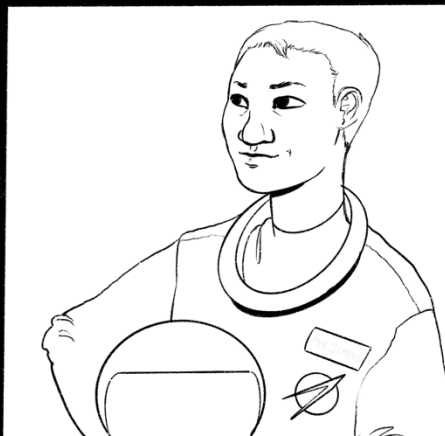
**Konnie**  
THE STAR PROJECTOR

HEROES OF SCIENCE:  
**MAE JEMISON**

Konnie is the star projector in our planetarium.  
Color in her visit with today's hero of science, Mae Jemison!



Today's hero is Dr. Mae Jemison. She was the first African-American woman to orbit Earth!



After serving in the Peace Corps, Dr. Mae Jemison was selected for NASA's astronaut program, in 1987. She flew on the space shuttle in 1992, and spent the mission doing experiments related to how people and animals survive in space.



After leaving NASA, she has continued to do both charity and educational work, as well as founding the Jemison Group Inc., which consults on the impact of technology on people.

List three of Dr. Mae Jemison's traits that helped her achieve her dreams.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

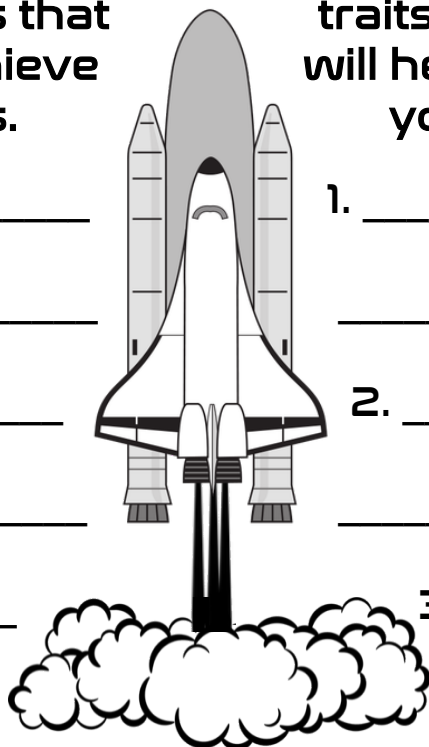
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2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



List three of your traits or talents that will help you achieve your dreams.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Quoatable Quotes

By Dr. Mae Jemison

"Never be limited by other people's limited imaginations."

- At the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, 2009

"The thing that I have done throughout my life is to do the best job that I can and to be me."

- For Ebony Magazine, 1987

"I realized I would feel comfortable anywhere in the universe — because I belonged to and was a part of it, as much as any star, planet, asteroid, comet, or nebula."

- After the Endeavor space shuttle returned from mission STS-47, 1992