

The Seven Brightest Stars in Heaven

By Celeste LeBeaux

NOTES

On January 28, 1986, NASA's Space Shuttle Challenger lifted off from Cape Canaveral at approximately 11:38 a.m. Seventy-three seconds into its mission, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded, killing all seven astronauts on board, including NASA's first civilian flight crew member—a young teacher named Crista McAuliffe. These poems should be performed by a female and entered in Poetry Interpretation. These poems are character-driven, and each eye-witness account should suggest a different character and how this historical tragedy touched her life. The key to the poems, *Tiny Rocket* and *Y*, lies in the performers ability to visualize the events as they happen. For example, in *Tiny Rocket*, the narrator witnesses the explosion while attending an assembly in her elementary school cafeteria. The narrator of this poem should see the big screen in the cafeteria. See the reactions of the teachers lining the wall. See the reactions of the fellow classmates. *Tiny Rocket*, however, does possess humor in the first half of the poem. Play that humor. Remember, nothing bad has happened, until the students quiet down and actually see the live images projected onto the screen. *Y* takes place in a beauty salon, and the narrator of the poem is a young mother with her toddler son. Create the environment. See the other women in the waiting area. See the television in the corner. See the son on the floor. Visualization makes these poems come to life for the audience. In the final poem, *The Seven Brightest Stars in Heaven*, perform the narrator with honesty. Visualize and look for the brightest stars sweeping across the nighttime sky. Again, simply create the environment. The drama mask icons are merely visible to show the performer where she might want to turn her pages. As with any historical collection of poems, be respectful of the event itself. These astronauts were American heroes. These poems pay tribute to those who lost their lives and to NASA, which continues to explore the final frontier.

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Tiny Rocket

I remember the first time I saw *Star Wars*.
I wanted to be like Luke Skywalker,
Only I was a girl,
So I pretended Luke Skywalker
Was incapacitated,
As Princess Leia took over the controls.

To fly in spacecrafts
At the speed of light...

If I couldn't be a *Star Wars* heroine,
The next best thing
Would to be an astronaut.
My parents thought it was cute
And encouraged me at every turn.

We even took a summer vacation
To Houston to visit NASA.



In the weeks preceding
The Space Shuttle Challenger launch,
My class participated in a myriad
Of space activities...
Making rocket mosaics out of macaroni,
Writing poetry,
Writing letters to the flight crew...
Our teacher kept reminding us,
That on the morning of the launch,
We could witness history live
On a big screen in the cafeteria.



As luck would have it,
Launch day coincided
With my tenth birthday.
This was *indeed* a special day.

My mother made cupcakes for the class,
And on top of each cupcake,