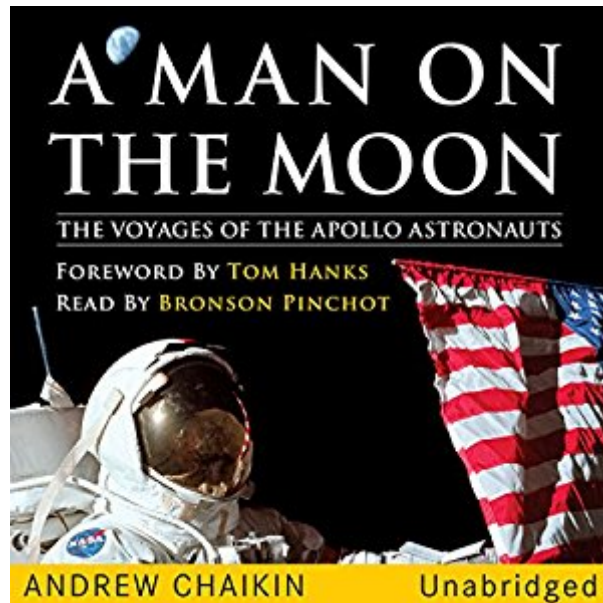




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A Man On The Moon: The Voyages Of The Apollo Astronauts



Synopsis

Audie Award, History/Biography, 2016 This acclaimed portrait of heroism and ingenuity captures a watershed moment in human history. The astronauts themselves have called it the definitive account of their missions. On the night of July 20, 1969, our world changed forever when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. Based on in-depth interviews with 23 of the 24 moon voyagers, as well as those who struggled to get the program moving, *A Man on the Moon* conveys every aspect of the Apollo missions with breathtaking immediacy and stunning detail.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was everything I expected it to be: an account of the Apollo program that did not bury me in technical details. But even with respect to the human side of the story, Andrew Chaikin shows compassion for readers by being selective. He does not list every item of clothing in the astronauts' dirty laundry. He writes like a novelist, presenting only details of interest, focusing on prominent events like Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon, while not neglecting domestic facets that reveal an astronaut's character. In other words, *A MAN ON THE MOON* is not a literally FULL story of an extremely technical human endeavor. On the other hand, Chaikin's book is not like Tom Wolfe's *THE RIGHT STUFF*, which seems to deliberately omit any mention of science and technology. When an explosion aborts Apollo XIII, Chaikin explains what happened. When astronauts collect rock samples, Chaikin writes about the geological evolution of the moon. But his descriptions meld with his narration, and understanding them is a breeze. In this book's Foreword, Tom Hanks says that in his TV miniseries *FROM EARTH TO THE MOON*, he hoped to convey what Chaikin has

"captured so well." For me, what Chaikin captured was the whole moon experience, the journey to and fro and the activities on the surface. From my reading, I remember craters, high-resolution vistas of tan-gray desolation, moon rocks with white crystals, moon rocks with green crystals, struggles while trying to extract bore samples, explorations in the lunar rover, and bouncy romps in 1/6 of Earth's gravity. And I remember that Apollo ended. Christopher Columbus at least had a concrete excuse: he was ignorant. He terminated his quest for China because he thought he had arrived. But we KNEW how to get to the moon. We terminated our quest with a flimsy excuse called "budget." Now here we are, voraciously consuming Earth's resources, which will soon be depleted. If we had continued our trips to the moon, we would be consuming a non-depletable resource from the sun. Solar-energy stations on the moon would be transmitting microwaves of power. Okay, I don't really know if that last is true, but maybe we should not have stopped the Apollo missions and more missions to the moon. We should not have burned our bridge. In his Epilogue, Chaikin refers to David Criswell, an engineer who says the moon could transmit enough power to supply all of Earth.

Most of the other famous lunar voyage accounts were written by astronauts and other insiders. Some of them are very good, but inherently limits the reader's experience to that of the author (and his writing ability). What Chaikin has done is monumental, in several regards. Chaikin conducted in-depth interviews with all of the moon voyagers, many of their family members, and plenty of NASA insiders. He reviewed hundreds of hours of audio and video captured from the Apollo program. He reviewed the bulk of the already penned memoirs and documentary material. Filtered through Chaikin's sense of propriety and writing talent, the result is just fascinating. After a little historical stage-setting, the reader gets to prep up and then ride along on each voyage of Apollo. It's not just a diary. Blocks of time and action are necessarily skipped (this is a big book). But what's included is just magic. Chaikin is kind to the astronauts, yet frank. The reader gets them "warts and all". Great suspense (if I hadn't already known the ending, some of the suspense would have been near unbearable). The author did a wonderful job of interpreting the quite complex technical science of Apollo into information which most readers will easily grasp and appreciate. The tale is pretty much politically neutral. Chaikin does just a bit of Apollo/space exploration cheerleading right at the end, but for the most part, he just tells the story. Although I'm a child of the 50's-70's, and generally witnessed Apollo firsthand (via the media), I never really appreciated the role of geological exploration in the moon voyages. The feat seemed to be just getting there and back (obviously). The book exposes that geological aspect. It exposes that much of the lunar surface exploration was

just plain hard work, performed by tired, sore men. A minor criticism -- As much as I esteem this author and book, I found the lunar geological detail towards the end to be tedious and sometimes a little over my head. Also quite curious was that although Chaikin seems to be an advocate for the value of the geological science endeavors (maybe he was a wee bit political), he never really seemed to clearly state and solidify what was an "elephant in the room" issue for me regarding the geology . . . the lunar exploration results really gave relatively few answers. As astronaut Commander Frank Borman quoted from the moon, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" Maybe that is what we scientifically learned, but no one will say it. Moving on . . . Finally, I was amazed (but not really) to find one thing clearly missing from the Apollo story: debilitating fear. That seems to be a common currency among much of our current national populace. I never saw it in the book. There was caution, and a few white-knuckle heart-pounding moments which consistently produced proper response action. There was some even calculated and limited reasonable expectation of death. But not a hint of cowardice or unwillingness to perform. Do read this book.

Ten years ago, I was reading this book. While sitting in my truck one day, I struck up a conversation with an engineer that was on the site with me. I began telling her that I was reading one of the best books I had ever encountered. She said she was also reading the best book she had ever read. It turns out, we were both reading this book! This is one of the most fascinating books I've ever read. Andrew's writing is crisp, and clear, and draws you in to the lives of the astronauts following their triumphs, and failures. Until this book, I had always assumed that the astronauts were a bunch of adreneline junkies, with more courage than brains. How wrong I was! They were, in fact, the very best we had to offer. Brilliant and resourceful, and never afraid to die, just afraid to screw up! You will come to appreciate the ingenuity of the Contractors who put the hardware together, as well as the countless thousands that sacrificed so much for us to make the goal, by the end of the decade, of landing a man on the moon, and returning him safely to the earth.. This book will keep you enthralled all the way through! Pick it up and I guarantee, you will re-read it again someday, it's that good.....

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