

# Zoom!

## Children's Book Rockets to International Space Station

DEBORAH LEE ROSE

Just like people on Earth, astronauts in orbit love to read. Now *Astronauts Zoom!* is part of that reading. The book was launched to the International Space Station (ISS), with four astronauts on the Dragon Endeavour spacecraft, for Story Time From Space.

After the spacecraft's first launch attempt was scrubbed (with countdown nail-bitingly stopped at two minutes before liftoff), the book rocketed into space on March 2, 2023, on Read Across America Day. In about 120 days in space, the book has orbited more than 57 million miles on the ISS.

The book was submitted for consideration long before its ultimate launch. First I waited eagerly to hear if Story Time From Space had selected it, then when NASA might send it up on a rocket to the ISS, and finally which astronaut would read the book aloud.

Pioneering astronaut Koichi Wakata, the first Japanese astronaut to command the ISS—who is featured in the book (exercising)—was on the International Space Station when the copy of *Astronauts Zoom!* arrived there. His read-aloud of the book in space was videotaped for a free Story Time From Space online resource for libraries and children anywhere in the world.



### Birth of the Book

When they were each around five years old, scientist Jessica Meir and engineer Christina Koch began imagining themselves as astronauts, telling their families and teachers their dreams of going into space.

In 2019, both made their dreams come true and made history as the first all-women spacewalking team. Koch has now been selected for the next crewed Artemis mission launch, becoming the first woman who will ever circle the Moon.

Together they spent seven hours and seventeen minutes floating outside the ISS, two hundred and fifty miles above Earth. As they worked on the ISS solar power system, they were zooming through space at 17,500 miles per hour!

The enormity of that speed (needed to keep the space station in orbit) inspired the title for my book *Astronauts Zoom!* (Pernickety Press/WunderMill Books, 2021). But while spacewalks get lots of attention, they're only one part of astronauts' extraordinary STEM work on the ISS.



**Deborah Lee Rose** is the internationally published author of nineteen children's books; she has won five national STEM children's book awards, including the DeBary Award for Outstanding Children's Science Books for *Astronauts Zoom!*, *Scientists Get Dressed*, and *Swoop and Soar*. Her newest picture book about Emperor penguins and climate change, *Penguins Ready to Go, Go, Go!*, will be published in spring 2024. Find free educational guides with activities at [www.deborahleerose.com](http://www.deborahleerose.com). The *Astronauts Zoom!* video read-aloud from Story Time From Space is free online at <https://storytimefromspace.com/astronauts-zoom/>.

## Try these Activities

Here are some space-themed activities to try in your library.

### Create a Space Station “Cupola” Area

One of astronauts’ favorite areas on the space station to read, take photos, or look down at Earth is in the multi-windowed cupola. Create a reading area in your library with photos of Earth, taken by astronauts from the space station cupola. You can find all kinds of views of Earth from the ISS at the Windows on Earth project. <https://www.windowsonearth.org>

Make a large cupola backdrop, where kids can take selfies as if they were astronauts on the ISS. (*Hint: Don’t show what kids are sitting on, so they look like they’re floating.*) Find NASA photo of the ISS cupola at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:STS130\\_cupola\\_view1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:STS130_cupola_view1.jpg).

### Create a Mission Patch

Every astronaut crew that travels to the ISS designs their mission patch together. All you need are circle tem-

plates, or paper plates, for children to draw their own mission patches.

### Throw a Pizza Party

Astronauts on the ISS eat all kinds of foods, including floating personal pizzas. You can throw an astronaut pizza party with a make-your-own pizza craft using paper plates, crinkle paper for cheese, and colorful paper cutouts or tissue paper for your favorite toppings. If you have an area that allows for making and heating food, kids can create their pizzas with tortillas, like astronauts do in space—no crumbs to mess up all that space equipment!

### Plan an Astronaut Visit

Astronauts speak to library audiences of all ages—in person and even from space! Contact NASA to submit a request, maybe cosponsored with local schools or a civic organization or science center. Visit <https://www.nasa.gov/about/speakers/astronautappearances.html>.

With “you are there” NASA photos, the book captures a busy day in the life of women and men astronauts, from when they awake in space till they’re zipped into their sleeping bags. Young readers and listeners can zoom through space with thirty-eight real astronauts, to learn things like, *How do astronauts stay warm, and cool, on spacewalks? What kinds of science do they investigate? What do they eat? Where do they sleep? Do they ever have fun? What do they see when they look down at Earth? How do they work “upside down?”*

In *Astronauts Zoom!* children (and adults) discover that how astronauts live in space is a lot like on Earth—but different because of microgravity. For example, astronauts must brush their teeth with their mouth closed around the toothbrush, so toothpaste and saliva won’t float out into the space station. When astronauts go to bed, it may be totally light outside, because the ISS passes from darkness into sunlight sixteen times in one of our Earth days.

And instead of just lying down and pulling up their covers, astronauts have to zip themselves into bags attached to something, so

they won’t bang around during their sleep. When they work, or eat, or just look out the windows, they may be “sitting” but have no chairs. Everything astronauts do happens while they’re floating!

*Astronauts Zoom!* includes the first all-women spacewalk team, first African American astronaut on extended space station mission, first Native American man astronaut in space, first European woman to command the ISS, and other pioneering astronauts. No matter their background or nationality, one thing the astronauts all have in common is gazing down and taking photos of Earth through the extra-large windows of the cupola. They see ocean, mountains, rivers, deserts, and millions of city and rural lights at night. Astronauts also see hurricanes, volcanoes, and other huge environmental events. Their photos help scientists and engineers

## Fun Fact

When you are showing *Astronauts Zoom!* for story time or to any group, no matter how you turn the book will be correct! There is no upside down on the ISS.

## Celebrate World Space Week October 4–10

Celebrate UN-declared World Space Week with people all around the world. Schedule a space themed event, maybe with a live astronaut on Earth, an astronaut on the space station, space educators in your area, or people involved in space related industries near you. You can add your event to WSW’s international calendar and download the free poster. For more information, visit [www.worldspaceweek.org](http://www.worldspaceweek.org).

on Earth better understand, and better protect, the planet that astronauts see with their very special space-eye view.

- Story Time From Space video read-aloud of *Astronauts Zoom!* read by astronaut Koichi Wakata on board the International Space Station (<https://storytimefromspace.com/astronauts-zoom/>).

## For More Information, Check Out These Resources

- A free educational guide to *Astronauts Zoom!* with Cool Tools Treasure Hunt, Reading Is Fundamental book activities, and author Q & A at RIF Literacy Central are available at <https://www.rif.org/literacy-central/book/astronauts-zoom-astronaut-alphabet>.

- Spot the Space Station from Earth. The ISS orbits Earth every ninety minutes. Get alerts when it will be visible from where you are. Visit <https://spotthestation.nasa.gov>. &



Author Kwame Alexander, winner of the 2015 Newbery Medal for *The Crossover*, invited the members of the 2015 Newbery Award Committee to be his guest at the World Premiere viewing of the film of his book, *The Crossover*, now streaming on Disney+. Eleven of the fifteen members were able to attend the event, which was held in the Hollywood Athletic Club on April 4, 2023. Members were thrilled to meet many of the actors in the production; Alexander served as both showrunner and writer for the series. According to committee member Stephanie Bange, "It was a magical, amazing time to regroup eight years later. The magic is still there." Photo courtesy of Stephanie Bange. Pictured are from left, Stan Steiner, Patrick Gall, Sylvia Tag, Randall Enos, Armin Arethna, Jenny Brown, Kwame Alexander, Abby Johnson, Janet Thompson, Lucinda Whitehurst, Eti Berland, and Stephanie Bange.

