
THE STORY OF
Mae Jemison
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GROWING UP

"My parents were the best scientists I knew, because they were always asking questions."



Mae loved school. She bounced at her desk happily, surrounded by crayons, books, and other wiggly children, waiting for the teacher to call on her.





"What do you want to be when you grow up?" her teacher asked the classroom of five- and six-year-olds. Mae listened closely as the other kids answered one by one.

Doctor. Teacher. Police officer. Mailman.

Mae waved her arm in the air frantically until finally, the teacher pointed at her.

"Yes, Mae, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

"I want to be a scientist!" Mae said proudly.

The teacher looked confused. It was 1961 in America, and at that time, most people did not believe that a little African American girl could grow up to be a scientist. In fact, most people would say it was impossible.

"Don't you mean a nurse?" her teacher asked, shaking her head.

"No," Mae said firmly, "I mean a scientist."





Mae's mother enrolled her in a local ballet studio. Her time studying dance started a lifelong passion. Mae seriously considered becoming a professional dancer. Dancing taught Mae grace, strengthened her body, and gave her an appreciation for hard work. Mae loved to dance, but she would soon discover something she loved even more.

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THE ROAD TO NASA

"Greatness can be captured in one word:
lifestyle. Life is God's gift to you;
style is what you make of it."





On September 12, 1992, Mae Jemison's lifelong dream finally came true, and she became the first black woman to go into space. She was a Mission Specialist for the STS-47 mission on the Space Shuttle *Endeavour*. Wanting to celebrate the arts as well as science, she took with her a poster of an African-American dancer and a special statue made in West Africa.



" 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."

Young Mae Jemison was a dreamer. While most girls were expected to become nurses or teachers, Mae just knew she would one day become an astronaut. Fascinated by science and the night sky, Mae pushed through the obstacles before her to become the first female African American astronaut. People everywhere will be inspired by this story of aspiration, determination, and grit and will discover that they can achieve anything they can conceive!

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ISBN 978-1-952920-17-2
50699>
9 781952 920172
SKU 724