

Biography

### Genre Study

A **biography** is the true story of a person's life that is written by another person. Look for

- facts about what the person has done.
- dates and place-names.

Childhood	
School Years	
Adulthood	

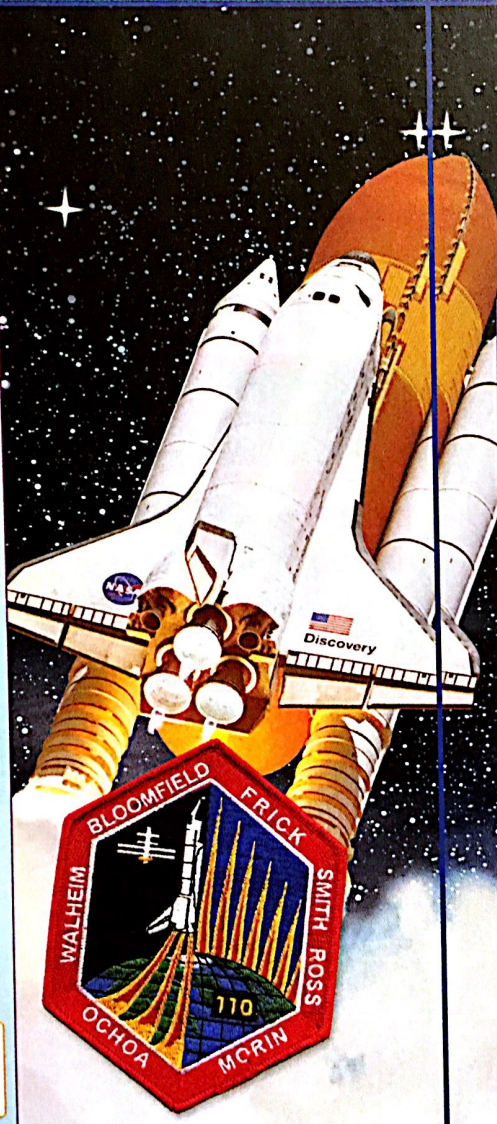
### Comprehension Strategy

Use **Prior Knowledge** of a subject to help you understand and remember what you read.

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**  
**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS—Reading 2.2**  
 Ask questions and support answers by connecting prior knowledge with literal information found in, and inferred from, the text. Reading 3.1 Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction)

# Ellen Ochoa, Astronaut

by Janet Michaels



**W**hen Ellen Ochoa was growing up, her mother told her to “reach for the stars.” Ellen had no idea that one day she would explore space. After many years of hard work, she became the first Hispanic woman to travel into space. She is a leader for people of all ages. This is her story.

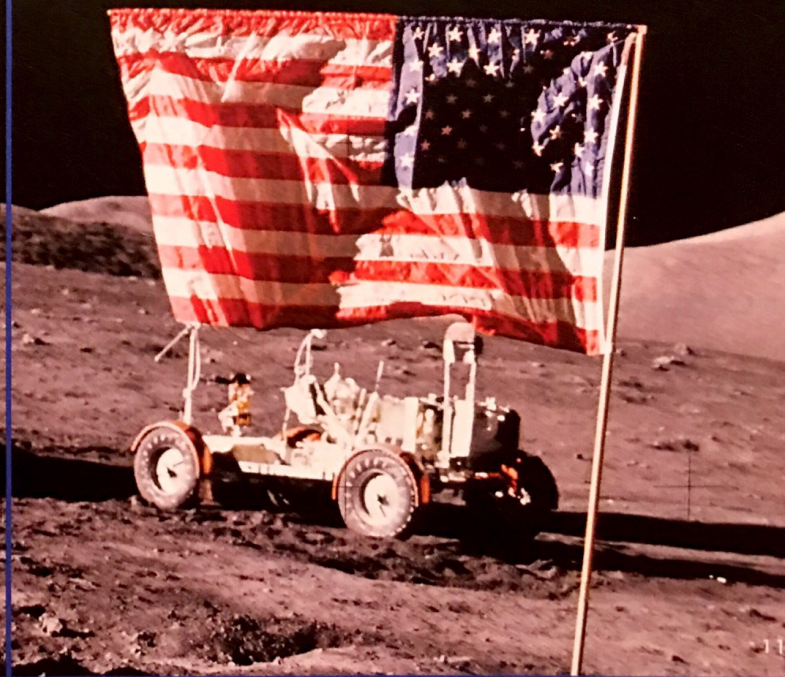


## THE EARLY YEARS 1

Ellen Ochoa was born in Los Angeles, California, on May 10, 1958. Her mother worked hard to raise Ellen and her sister and brothers. She taught her children how important it was to do well in school. She told them that if they worked hard, they could grow up to be anything they wanted to be. 2

In 1969, when she was just 11 years old, people first landed on the moon. It was a very exciting time. Many children wanted to be astronauts when they grew up, too. At that time, there were no women astronauts, so Ellen never dreamed of going into space. 3

▼ The last visit to the moon was in December 1972.



In school, Ellen was a top student and did well in all her classes. She loved music and learned to play the flute. Ellen spent hours practicing and became a very **talented** player. In high school, she played with a band for young people. **1**

▼ Ellen would later enjoy music in space, too.



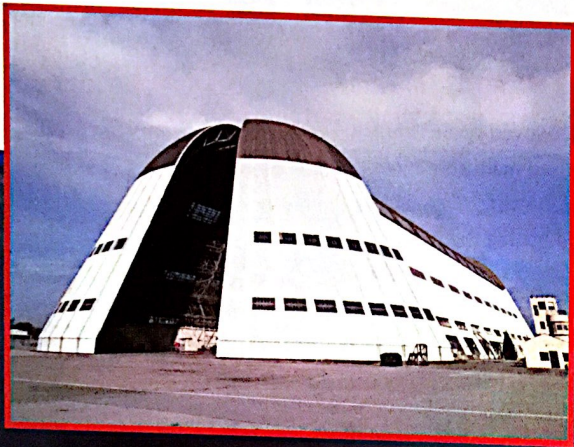
Ellen also loved math. Some people told her that girls were not good math students. She didn't let those people **hinder** her learning. Ellen always did her best. When she graduated, she had the highest grades in her class. **2**

Ellen decided that she wanted to be an engineer. There were people who did not think that a woman could do such a difficult job. Ellen had to study very hard, but she did well. She felt very proud when she graduated and got a job as an engineer. **3**

## INVENTOR AND MUSICIAN

As an engineer, Ellen Ochoa made robots that used special tools to “see” things around them. She and her team found a way for these robots to make computer parts. She wrote and spoke to many people about her invention.

▼ Ellen Ochoa worked as an engineer at the Ames Research Center in California.



Music remained an important part of her life. Playing the flute made her feel happy. She played so well that she won an award.

Ellen Ochoa enjoyed her job and her music, but she wondered what else she could do. Her friends said she should try to become an astronaut. So in 1985, she decided to apply for a job in the space program. She was disappointed when she was not accepted. Then she remembered what her mother had told her. If she worked hard, she could be anything she wanted to be.

▶ Ellen Ochoa enjoyed playing the flute, just as this girl does.



Ellen Ochoa waited for another chance to become an astronaut. While she waited, she joined a space **research** center. There she helped astronauts learn more about space. She learned to fly a plane and found that she loved to fly. **1**

Ellen Ochoa was now a musician, an inventor, and a pilot. She knew how to work on a team. She knew how to keep trying when things were difficult.

▼ **Ellen Ochoa practiced flying and became a pilot.**



In 1990, Ellen Ochoa's dream came true. She was chosen for the astronaut program. More than 2,000 people had applied to become astronauts, and she was one of just 22 who were chosen. **2 3**



▲ **Ellen Ochoa and Eileen Collins posed together on their first day of training at NASA.**

## ASTRONAUT TRAINING 2

Ellen Ochoa and her husband moved to Texas so that she could begin her astronaut training. Astronauts must learn to do things differently in space. Ellen Ochoa had to learn to use computers and special tools in space. Working inside a heavy space suit is not easy. It takes a lot of practice. 1

▼ Astronauts wear special suits during much of their training.



Ellen Ochoa made a lot of friends in the astronaut program.

Ellen Ochoa learned to work with a team of other astronauts to get jobs done. Astronauts become good friends because they spend so much time together.

It is important that astronauts exercise to stay in shape. In her training, Ellen Ochoa learned how to use special exercise machines in space. She also had to learn new ways to eat. In space, foods placed on a plate would float away, so astronauts' meals must come in special packages. 3

Astronaut training was hard, but Ellen Ochoa didn't give up. She knew she would have to keep working to be ready to go into space.

## A TRIP INTO SPACE

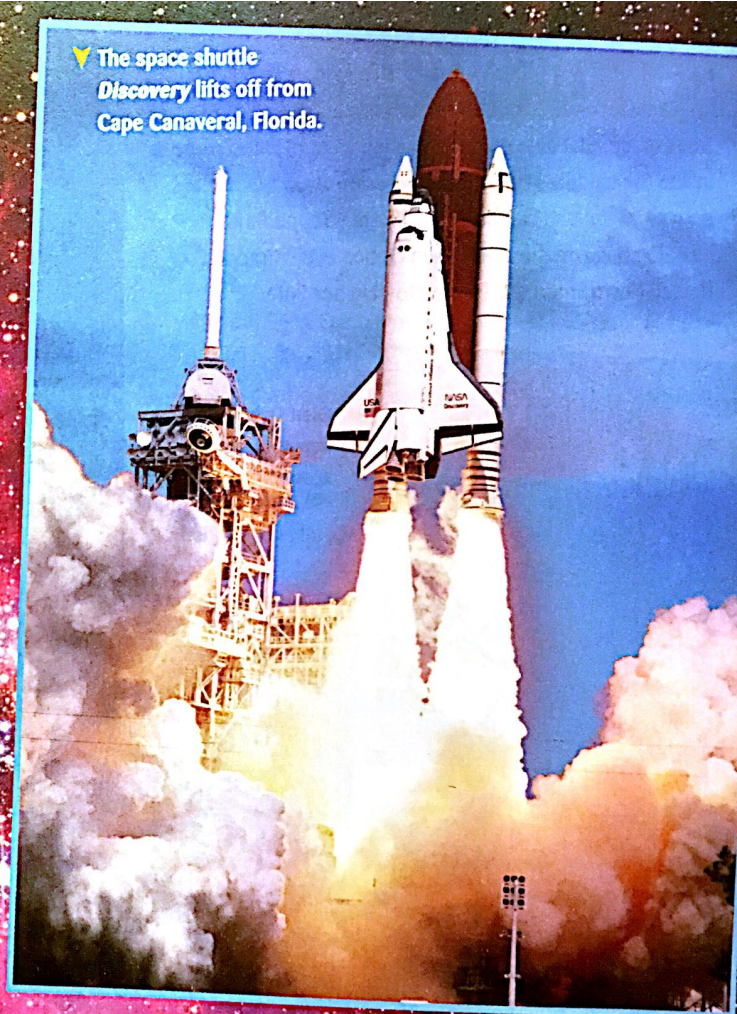
Finally, in April 1993, Ellen Ochoa became the first Hispanic woman to go into space. She flew on the space shuttle *Discovery*. The *Discovery* astronauts had a special job to do. Their job was to learn about the sun. Ellen Ochoa was able to use what she had learned about robots while she was in space. Her job was to control a robot arm on *Discovery*. She used the arm to catch a satellite that had been studying the sun. The information from the satellite helped the astronauts learn more about the sun's energy.

1  
2 3

▼ The crew of the space shuttle *Discovery*.



▼ The space shuttle *Discovery* lifts off from Cape Canaveral, Florida.



Ellen Ochoa was amazed at how beautiful Earth looks from space. She also enjoyed floating from place to place inside the shuttle. The astronauts had to strap themselves down to work and exercise. They slept strapped into sleeping bags on the walls. Ellen Ochoa even strapped herself down when she wanted to play her flute.

1

2



▶ Ellen Ochoa made beautiful music in space!

Ellen Ochoa made three more trips into space. On one of those trips, she visited the space station. Her job was to deliver supplies so that other astronauts could live and work there.

▶ Here, Ellen Ochoa delivers supplies to the space station.





Ellen Ochoa tells her story to children all over the country. They are very interested in what it is like to be an astronaut. The most important thing Ellen Ochoa tells children is what her mother told her. If you work hard, you can make your dreams come true. **3**

▼ This photo was taken aboard space shuttle *Atlantis* in 1994.



## Think Critically

R2.1  
R2.2  
R2.3  
R3.4

- 1 Which section of this biography would you read if you wanted to find out about Ellen Ochoa's childhood?  
**LOCATE INFORMATION**
- 2 What did Ellen Ochoa invent? **IMPORTANT DETAILS**
- 3 Do you think Ellen Ochoa is a hero? Explain. **EXPRESS PERSONAL OPINIONS**
- 4 How can you tell that the author wants readers to know that music is important to Ellen Ochoa? **DRAW CONCLUSIONS**
- 5 **WRITE** Think about the skills you are learning in school. Choose two of these skills, and explain how they might be important for your future. **SHORT RESPONSE**



**CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**  
**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS**—Reading 2.1 Use titles, tables of contents, chapter headings, glossaries, and indexes to locate information in text; Reading 2.2 Ask questions and support answers by connecting prior knowledge with literal information found in, and inferred from, the text; Reading 2.3 Demonstrate comprehension by identifying answers in the text; Reading 3.4 Determine the underlying theme or author's message in fiction and nonfiction text.