

Apollo 13

Houston, we have a problem.

Cast

Tom HanksJim Lovell
Bill Paxton Fred Haise
Kevin Bacon Jack Swigert
Gary SiniseKen Mattingly

Ed Harris Gene Kranz
Kathleen QuinlanMarilyn Lovell
Chris EllisDeke Slayton

1. This movie shows the efforts of teamwork and what happens during crisis. Identify the different teams and team leaders shown in the movie. Explain what the leader's job was along with the way that they coped with the crisis. (don't forget the family at home)
2. The director, Ron Howard, attempted to make this movie as authentic as possible using direct dialogue from the flight and recreating the actual NASA mission control center. Identify the human qualities and ethical principles that he attempted to explore and examine through his actors. Identify the characters who showed these qualities and explain how they demonstrated them. (e.g. loyalty, courage, responsibility)
3. Ken Mattingly is replaced on the original flight crew by Jack Swigert because of a possibility of illness. Who takes the ultimate responsibility for this difficult decision? What does this demonstrate about his leadership?
4. There is some discussion about this being the 13th flight for the Apollo program. How does the film show the world of superstition interacting with the way NASA does things?
5. What do the astronauts do to make sure that they are prepared for any problem that could occur on a mission? What problem happened on the Apollo 13 mission? Why was it different?
6. Gene Kranz's response to the crisis is to have his team "work the problem." What does he mean by this? How does this approach avoid finger pointing and blame laying?
7. What leadership skills are used by the engineers when they have to "invent a way to put a square peg in a round hole"?
8. Explain why the Apollo 13 mission was described as a "successful failure".