Franklin's Dream

It is 1986. The space shuttle *Columbia* lifts off. Franklin Chang-Diaz is on the shuttle. This is his first space flight. His dream has come true.



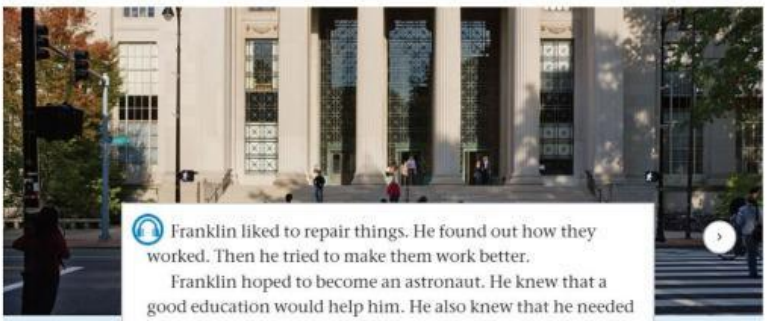
Franklin was born in San José, Costa Rica. When he was a boy, he heard about *Sputnik*. *Sputnik* was the first satellite to orbit Earth.

Franklin climbed a mango tree. He watched the sky for hours.

"I was seven years old," he said, "when I decided to become an astronaut."

Franklin never let go of his dream.

Franklin was a good student in school. But that was not all. He was a **curious** child. He liked to observe the things around him. He tried to learn more about them. Sports and music were his hobbies . Science and reading were the **subjects** he liked best. He planned to study science.



Franklin liked to repair things. He found out how they worked. Then he tried to make them work better.

Franklin hoped to become an astronaut. He knew that a good education would help him. He also knew that he needed to learn English. So he moved to the United States. His parents helped him.

Franklin kept working hard. He learned English, and he studied science. His teachers helped him. He went to **college**. Franklin became a **scientist**.

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In 1980, Franklin was chosen to become an astronaut. He started to train in classrooms and in labs. After six years of training, he was ready. It was 1986, the year of *Columbia's* flight.

Franklin flew on a total of seven space flights—more flights than anyone had ever gone on before. He would later become a director at Johnson Space Center in Houston. He **retired** from **NASA** in 2005.

These days, Franklin is the **CEO** of a **rocket** technology company, and a professor of physics at Rice University and the University of Houston.



Flying in space is exciting. But for Franklin, the sight of Earth from outer space is the best part. He says that it is very beautiful. He says that we must take care of Earth.

"Earth is **humanity's** spaceship and the only one we have," says Franklin. "We must protect it."

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