

Without question, these are 2018's best space books for kids



Enlarge / Computers, they're just like us!
Cyrus Farivar

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Every time I take my kids to the library, I gravitate toward the non-fiction section and, in particular, the space books. (Hey, it's a good primer for Star Trek!)

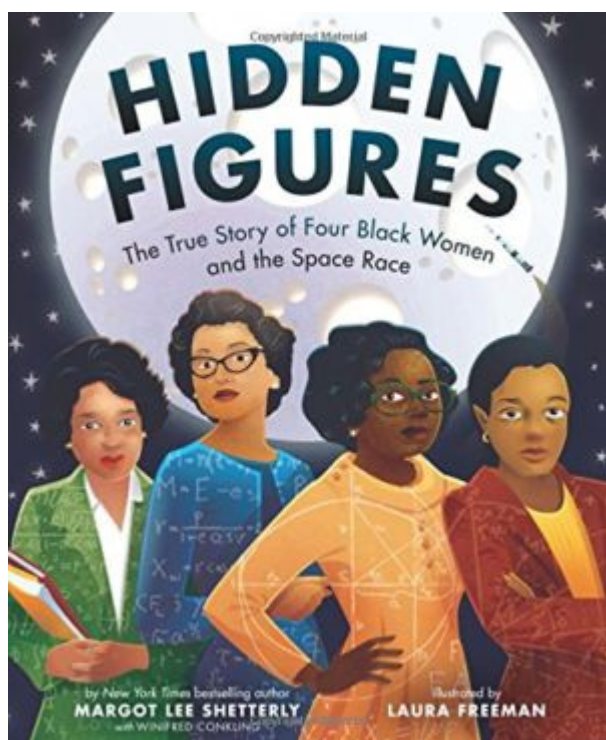
This year, there have been some amazing new children's books that I've loved reading and have read repeatedly in recent months.

Here are my four favorites, in no order:

Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race

By Margot Lee Shetterly

Illustrated by Laura Freeman



Margot Lee Shetterly

This children's book is by the same author of the adult non-fiction book that was turned into the blockbuster movie of the same name.

Here, the story is distilled for younger readers, pointing out how four women persevered and became some of NASA's top "human computers."

"Today we think of computers as machines, but in the 1940s, computers were actual people like Dorothy, Mary, Katherine, and Christine," Shetterly writes. "Their job was to do math."

In this edition, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary

Jackson, and Christine Darden come to life on the page through bright illustrations and creative facial expressions that young children certainly can empathize with.

- The expression on these women's faces gets me every single time.
Cyrus Farivar
- An unparalleled brain and laser-focused eyes.
Cyrus Farivar
- Dr. Mae Jemison went to space in 1992.
Cyrus Farivar
- I've definitely seen rocket ships of this design in our house before.
Cyrus Farivar
- This page evokes *The Little Prince*.
Cyrus Farivar

Earthrise: Apollo 8 and the Photo That Changed the World

By James Gladstone

Illustrated by Christy Lundy



James Gladstone

As an adult, the more I learn about 1968, the more I realize

what an insane time it was.

That was the year the Vietnam War expanded, that Martin Luther King Jr. was killed, that Robert F. Kennedy was killed, that *2001: A Space Odyssey* was released, that Oakland's Black Panthers were at their height, that Douglas Engelbart performed the "Mother of all Demos."

1968 was also the year that Apollo 8 launched. (You've seen our video series, yes?)

But after the end of that tumultuous year, there was some good news.

Finally, on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1968, Apollo 8 entered orbit around the Moon. Three astronauts—Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and William A. Anders—became the first humans to see the far side of the Moon.

[embedded content]

Video shot by Joshua Ballinger, edited and produced by Jing Niu and David Minick. [Click here for transcript.](#)

They took a famous photo, now dubbed "Earthrise," which changed the world.

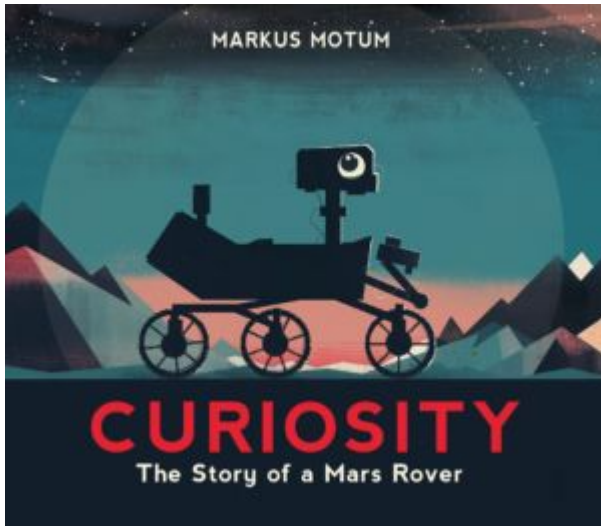
The book even includes a few lines of actual dialogue from the men, which you can experience in an animated recreation from December 20, 2013.

"Look at that picture over there! Here's the Earth coming up. Wow, is that pretty!"

Grown-ups: you may want to read this January 2018 *Smithsonian* story about the origins of the photo and the decades-long controversy of who actually took that shot.

Curiosity: The Story of a Mars Rover

By Markus Motum



Markus Motum

It's amazing to think that, for more than six years now, there has been a little robot tooling about the surface of Mars. (Heck, it even has its own Twitter account.)

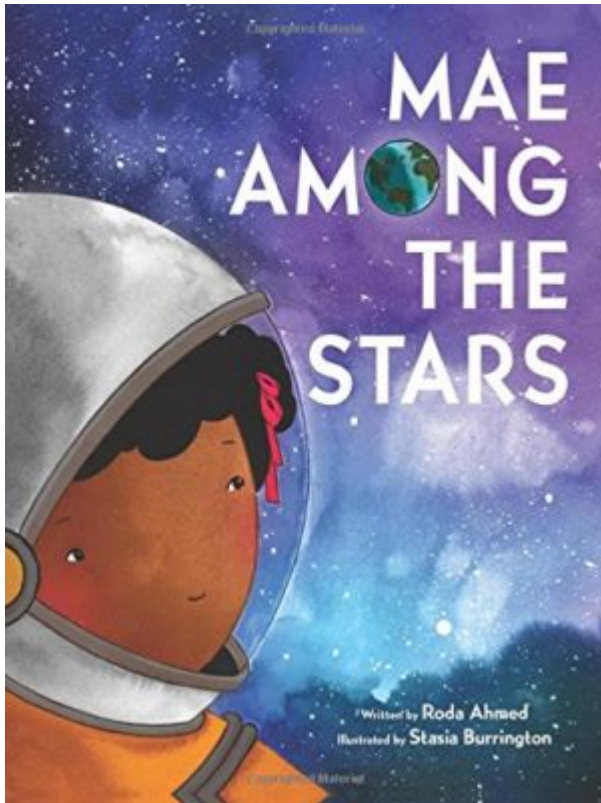
In a sense, Curiosity is the older sibling to InSight, the new rover that recently deployed a seismograph into the planet's surface.

Curiosity has been there for years. This book, told from the perspective of the robot itself, explains in a wide-book format what it meant for science and for humanity to get a cute little robot on the surface of the Red Planet.

Mae Among the Stars

By Roda Ahmed

Illustrated by Stasia Burrington



Roda Ahmed

This book tells the amazing story of Mae Jemison, the first African-American woman to go to space.

She served as an astronaut aboard the space shuttle *Endeavor*, which is now a museum piece in Los Angeles.

As depicted in the book, Jemison's parents encouraged her from when she was little.

"You will find your way, Mae," her father told her. "Because if you dream it, believe in it, and work hard for it, anything is possible."

There's a key moment that Jemison has talked about in interviews and in her own book about how one of her school teachers dismissed Jemison's desire to be an astronaut.

"Mae, are you sure you don't want to be a nurse?" the teacher said.

"I don't want to be a nurse," Jemison replied in the book, "I want to be an astronaut."

And she did. The book drives home the simple lesson: kids should dream big, even if others' silly ideas stand in the way.

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