



Picture Books

Lucky 13: Survival in Space

Richard Hilliard

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As a boy in 1930's Wisconsin, Jim Lovell spent his free time reading stories about astronauts and mysterious planets. Forty years later, Jim would find himself in the midst of a real-life space adventure that held the entire world captivated and nearly cost Jim and fellow astronauts Fred Haise and Jack Swigert their lives—the 1970 Apollo 13 mission. Through clear, concise text and beautiful, two-page illustrations, author Richard Hilliard makes this tale of bravery and tenacity accessible to children between the ages of six and twelve.

The first pages of the book follow Lovell from boyhood through his career as a U.S. Navy pilot, to his acceptance as an astronaut in 1962 and his 1968 mission in Apollo 8, the first mission in which astronauts orbited the moon. The remainder of *Lucky 13* is devoted to the Apollo 13 mission.

Readers are led through the selection of the three astronauts, then on to the moment when, in a dramatic illustration, Apollo 13 launches on April 11, 1970. Each stage of the ensuing journey is described in successive spreads that slowly increase with intensity as Mission Control in Houston and the three astronauts begin to realize that the explosion that occurred outside the Command Module two days into the mission has seriously damaged the spacecraft and has put the three men in grave danger.

Hilliard has authored several other children's picture books focusing on space, including *John Glenn*, and *Neil, Buzz, and Mike Go To the Moon*, an IRA Notable Children's Book and a James Madison Book Award nominee; his expertise demonstrates itself fully in *Lucky 13*. Hilliard's illustrations perfectly complement the text on each page and manage to help young readers understand the complexities of the problems experienced by the Apollo 13 astronauts without being either overly technical or frightening. Sidebars throughout the book give older or particularly interested readers more information about the page's topic.

Hilliard writes and illustrates the Apollo 13 incident with artistry and humanity. This

account is an excellent supplement for elementary grade space travel studies or for individual children interested in the exciting world of space.