

Name _____

Date _____



Kalpana Chawla

At age three, the first plane
She saw sparked a fascination
With flying. She kept her head up,
Couldn't get enough of the planes that flew above
Karnal, India, her hometown.
As a young girl, Kalpana Chawla
Had a dream she would make it to space,
And this dream fit perfectly with her first name.
Kalpana means imagination.
In her imagination she could make it.
But for Indian women, education
Was a luxury at the time. This limitation
Made Chawla's dream feel unlikely.
Still, she decided she was gonna try. She
Worked hard, applied, and got accepted to
Punjab Engineering College. At school,
She decided to study Aerospace
Engineering, but some professors said, Wait
Isn't that a little too hard for a woman?
If I were you, I probably wouldn't.
She tuned it out, wouldn't let 'em distract
Her from her dream, from her chosen path.
At age 20 she moved to the US,
Where she got an aerospace engineering masters
Degree, but she wouldn't stop.
Her imagination remained among the stars.
She got her doctorate, then NASA called,

Inviting her to participate in the astronaut
Program. And three years later,
Her dream became reality, not imagination,
'Cause in November 1997
She embarked on her first mission,
Orbiting Earth for 15 days.
The first Indian woman to go to space.
Her and her crew all made it home safely.
Fast forward 'bout six years later,
Chawla was picked for another journey:
The Columbia Mission in 2003,
Part two of her real-life dream.
Seven on board, the mission was complete.
But as the craft re-entered Earth's atmosphere
NASA was faced with its biggest fear.
The Columbia disintegrated, broke apart—
A disaster stemming from a broken part.
Chawla and the whole crew died that day
February 1st—a tragedy.
To this day, Dr. Kalpana Chawla
Remains a towering role model
Who inspires others to imagine
What could be, 'cause anything can happen.
Her name's on schools and streets
And satellites in space, where she'll always be.