

Name _____

Date _____

Kalpana Chawla - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

- Kalpana Chawla was born on March 17, 1962, in Karnal, India. Upon starting school, she picked her own name, Kalpana, which means “idea” or “imagination.” Her interest in aviation and space travel began when she was three years old and saw an airplane in the sky for the first time. In 1997, Chawla became the first Indian-born woman to go to space. After returning from her first mission, she shared this thought: “When you look at the stars and the galaxy, you feel that you are not just from any particular piece of land, but from the solar system.”

Which of the following is NOT true about Kalpana Chawla's early life and career?

- A. Chawla was born on March 17, 1962.
- B. Chawla was the first Indian-born woman to go to space.
- C. The name Kalpana means “idea” or “imagination.”
- ☒ D. Chawla wasn't interested in space travel until she was an adult.

According to the passage, Chawla's “interest in aviation and space travel began when she was three years old.”

- Kalpana Chawla dreamed of flight and space travel from a young age, but education was a luxury for women in India when she was born. It was uncommon for women to attend college at all, let alone to study in a field like aerospace engineering. Some of her teachers even told her this career path would be too difficult for a woman. But Chawla persevered and earned a bachelor's degree from Punjab Engineering School. In 1982, she moved to the United States and received her master's degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas and a doctorate from the University of Colorado Boulder. In 1994, Chawla was chosen to participate in NASA's competitive astronaut program.

Based on this passage, which of these best describes Kalpana Chawla's character?

- ☒ A. Determined
The text states that Chawla “persevered” in earning bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees despite discouragement from her teachers and the general lack of support for education for women in India at the time. This shows that she was determined.
- B. Generous
- C. Easy-going
- D. Silly

3. In 1997, Chawla flew to space for the first time on the shuttle *Columbia*, where she studied plant reproduction and operated a robotic arm that is still in use today. Her second space mission on *Columbia* launched on January 16, 2003. Chawla and her crew conducted several scientific experiments during their 16 days in space. The shuttle was meant to land at the Kennedy Space Center on February 1, 2003, but it broke apart due to an issue with the thermal insulation system upon reentering Earth's atmosphere. All seven people on board, including Chawla, died in the accident. Chawla's legacy persists long after her passing. After the *Columbia* disaster, schools, streets, and even satellites and a hill on Mars were named in her honor. Chawla was an innovator in her industry and became a role model and inspiration for many.

Which of these best describes Chawla's work aboard *Columbia*?

- A. Programming the navigation system B. Piloting the space shuttle
C. Researching and conducting experiments D. Taking photos of distant planets

*According to the passage, Chawla "studied plant reproduction and operated a robotic arm" on her first *Columbia* mission. On her second, "Chawla and her crew conducted several scientific experiments."*