

Discussion Questions for *Apollo 13*

Some of the major characters to watch for: NASA lead flight director Gene Kranz, Astronauts Jim Lovell, Ken Mattingly, Fred Haise, Jack Swigert

1. Most of the management lessons in this film begin when the problems in space begin. Watch for the coordination of efforts at NASA to address the unprecedented challenges as they arise, and take notes on how that unfolds. What can we learn about effective management from how the NASA teams and leadership address the problems?
2. There are other aspects of effective management in this film, in particular, (1) having the right people for each job, and (2) having a training system that develops astronauts to perform tasks flawlessly. Comment on how these two management priorities contribute the mission's success or failure.
3. In a classic moment from the film, someone comments that this might to be the worst disaster in the history of NASA. Gene Kranz, the NASA flight director, quickly retorts: "With all due respect, gentlemen, I believe this is going to be our finest hour." In another moment, Gene announces "We've never lost an American in space and we're not about to lose one on my watch! Failure is not an option." Comment on Gene's posture and how it might affect the performance of his team.
4. What is the most important lesson—professional or personal—that you want to retain from this story?