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Ilan Ramon: Israel's First Astronaut

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Stone, Tanya Lee. *Ilan Ramon: Israel's first astronaut*. Millbrook Press, 2003. ISBN 0761328882. \$23.90. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Astronauts--Israel--Biography--Juvenile literature; Ramon, Ilan, 1954-2003--Juvenile literature; Columbia (Spacecraft)--Accidents--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

This well-written, if slightly idealized, biography of Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut, begins with a description of the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster that took Ramon's life. It then briefly recounts Ramon's birth and childhood in Israel and his early career as an Israeli Air Force fighter pilot. When Ramon finished college, he worked for a time in the private sector as a research scientist, and then returned to serve as a squadron leader in the IAF. Because of his skill as a pilot and scientist he was chosen by the government to represent his country as its first astronaut. He moved his family to Texas where he trained for 4 years to be Columbia's payload specialist. His duties on Columbia were successfully completed before the mission ended in tragedy. The book concludes with various tributes to Ramon's courage and character.

Stone's writing style is clear and interesting. She adds human interest by describing the items Ramon took with him into space and Ramon's involvement with student science projects on the shuttle. Stone is careful not to fictionalize. Every detail and quote is documented in a lengthy list of sources at the end of the book. There is also a useful list of web resources and a detailed index. Within the body of the book, Stone includes three double-spread inserts that give accessible descriptions of the history of the space shuttle program, life on the space shuttle, and the different jobs performed by space shuttle crew members. The biography is tactfully illustrated with captioned color photos. This is a good choice for any reader interested the space program or the Columbia disaster. It is also noteworthy as a biography of a contemporary Israeli hero without political overtones.