

Millions of Chinese Children Get a Science Lesson From Space

Sitting in rapt attention all across China Thursday June 20, an estimated 60 million school children and their teachers at about 80,000 middle schools watched a 40-minute science lesson taught from 300km above the Earth by astronaut Wang Yaping. Wang is aboard the Tiangong-1 laboratory module with two crewmates, for a two-week mission which includes this first class from space.

Her lessons were a series of physics demonstrations of the uniqueness of microgravity. In some, a split screen showed the same experiment under the one-gravity environment on Earth, for comparison. The experiments demonstrated surface tension, pendulum motion, gyroscope function, and other activities.

Wang took questions from students during the session, and also asked a gathering of students affiliated with the high school of Renmin University to answer her questions. The lesson was broadcast live on China Central Television, and classrooms unequipped with television sets were able to listen on the radio.

Chinese media showed a letter written by former American astronaut, Barbara Morgan, to Wang Yaping on June 13. Morgan became the first teacher in space during her 2007 Space Shuttle flight. Her predecessor, New Hampshire schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe had died in the 1986 Challenger accident. Wang replied to Morgan's letter, after she had taught her space lessons, expressing her "admiration and respect" for what Morgan had done "for manned space programs and for education." She ended her message, hoping to "join the effort, as you have done, to bring science-loving youth around the world closer to their dreams of exploring the universe."

Video can be found

here: <http://english.cntv.cn/special/shenzhou10/index.shtml>