|  |
| --- |
| 1. Annotate the article with at least five notes that show evidence of understanding and thinking.
 |

**One step closer to printing that boarding pass to Mars**

By Scott Dance, *Baltimore Sun,* adapted by Newsela staff*,* March 29, 2015

BALTIMORE — Laura Smith-Velazquez has been dreaming of going into space since she was 8 years old. She still remembers the first time she looked into a telescope. She would watch “Star Trek" on TV and imagine herself commanding a starship.

Every year, Smith-Velazquez tries for a shot at becoming an astronaut for NASA, the U.S. space agency. She has never made it, but she keeps trying. But Smith-Velazquez might just get her chance to visit space after all. A Dutch group called Mars One just chose her as a semi-finalist for a new kind of space mission.

**A One-Way Ticket To Ride**

Mars One wants to build a colony on Mars by 2025. The astronauts they send to Mars will live in the colony and never come back to Earth. Smith-Velazquez and her husband, Matthew Velazquez, signed up for Mars One together. They agreed that they would either go to Mars together or neither of them would go.

About 200,000 people signed up to be a part of the Mars One program. Smith-Velazquez made the cut for the last 100 people, but her husband did not. Now Smith-Velazquez says she is prepared to leave him behind, and her husband says he understands. He knows this is something she has always wanted to do.

Mars One says it is seeking astronauts who are curious, trusting and creative. They need people who are good at solving problems and bouncing back from challenges. People who sign up had to make a video and study facts about Mars. They had to write to Mars One to tell them why they wanted to be in the program.

Smith-Velazquez also had to speak to someone from Mars One. They asked her whether she would ever want to come back from Mars. Smith-Velazquez said she was sure she wouldn't want to come back. “The people you go with become your family,” she said.

**Still Much To Figure Out**

Smith-Velazquez is glad to be getting closer and closer to making the final Mars One team. She does not know exactly why she got so far. She has a pilot’s license and designs parts for planes, so she is used to flying in small spaces. Smith-Velazquez said her Cherokee Indian background and ability to get along with others might also have helped her to stand out.

Even if she makes the final cut, Smith-Velazquez knows her chances of getting to Mars are not very good. There are a lot of problems the Mars One team has not figured out yet.

NASA refuses to comment on Mars One, but the scientists who are willing to talk about it say the project's timeline sounds far too short. “To get to Mars you need rockets (and) spaceships,” said John M. Logsdon, a professor at George Washington University who studies space policy. “None of that exists.”

Mars’ atmosphere is also dramatically different from Earth’s, so oceans cannot form on its surface. Mars radiates heat away more effectively than Earth. Temperatures on Mars range from a comfortable 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit in the sunshine, to 100 degrees below zero at night.

“How do you pack in enough supplies and figure out how to generate your own supplies — air, heat and oxygen — when you get there?" astrophysicist Frank Summers asked. "That’s the major problem to solve.”

A study by scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) found that Mars One needs to rework some of its plans to keep settlers alive. For example, the team plans to pull water out of the soil on Mars. They also plan to grow crops that will give off oxygen. According to MIT, those plans will only work for a couple months at best.

**Waiting For The Transport To Come**

The Mars One team also needs very expensive equipment. They are having a hard time getting people to give them money to buy rockets and spaceships. Some people think Mars One's leader is not serious about the project. They say he is too busy making a TV show about it.

Still, Mars One supporters like Smith-Velazquez are not giving up. She says space programs like NASA would not be where they are today if they had not failed along the way.

Smith-Velazquez says it does not bother her that so many people keep going on about why they think the project will not work. She says they make good points that help Mars One to prepare for the mission. She also says we will never get there if we don't try. “Yeah, there’s a lot of risk, but there’s a lot of risk no matter what you do,” Smith-Velazquez said. “I’m willing to take that risk.”

**Discussion Questions**

1. What new information did you learn from this article?
2. What ideas did you like in the article?
3. What ideas did you dislike in the article?
4. What is your overall reaction to the article?