

Explore Space

Our Solar System

Our solar system is made up of the sun and eight **planets**. A planet is a large ball made of rock or gas. Each planet **orbits**, or travels around, the sun. The sun is at the center of the solar system.



NASA

The planets in our solar system are all different sizes.

The **sun** is a star. It is a ball of hot gas. It gives off light and heat. Why does the sun look different from other stars? The sun is the star closest to Earth.

Mercury is the closest planet to the sun. It is also the smallest. It has mountains and **craters**. Craters are holes in the ground that were made when space rocks crashed into it.

Venus is the hottest planet. It is hot enough to melt a rocket ship. Venus is about the same size as Earth.

Earth is our home. It is also the only planet with oceans. In fact, Earth is covered mostly with water. That is why it is called the Blue Planet.

Mars is called the Red Planet. It has reddish dirt. It also has mountains, volcanoes, ice caps, and **canyons**. A canyon is a deep, narrow valley with steep sides.

Jupiter is the largest planet. It is made of thick gases. Very strong winds blow on this planet.

Saturn is the second-largest planet. It has rings around it. The rings are made of rock, dust, and ice.

Uranus was the first planet to be discovered using a telescope. It is cold and windy here.

Neptune is the coldest planet because it is farthest from the sun. The planet is made of gases.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is a planet?

- A a large ball made of rock or gas
- B a large ball made of only rock
- C a ball of hot gas that gives off light

2. The author provides a list of what in the passage?

- A stars in our solar system
- B planets in our solar system
- C moons in our solar system

3. The sun is at the center of our solar system. What evidence from the passage best supports this statement?

- A The sun is the star that is closest to Earth.
- B A star is a ball of gas that gives off heat and light.
- C The planets in our solar system orbit the sun.

4. Read the following sentence: "**Uranus** was the first planet to be discovered using a telescope."

Based on this information, what conclusion can you make about Uranus?

- A Uranus is too far away to see with the naked eye.
- B Uranus is the planet that is farthest from the sun.
- C Uranus is blocked by Saturn so it is hard to see.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A the sun and the planets in our solar system
- B why the Earth is called the Blue Planet
- C what the rings around Saturn are made of

6. Read the following sentences: "Mars is called the Red Planet. It has **reddish** dirt."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**reddish**" mean?

- A mostly brown in color
- B moist and fertile
- C slightly red in color

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Neptune is the farthest planet from the sun, ____ it is the coldest planet.

- A so
- B but
- C because

8. What is at the center of our solar system?

9. Why is Earth called the Blue Planet?

10. Compare Venus and Earth by explaining how they are similar and how they are different.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 450

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8. What is at the center of our solar system?

Suggested answer: *The sun* is at the center of our solar system.

9. Why is Earth called the Blue Planet?

Suggested answer: Earth is called the Blue Planet because it is covered mostly with water.

10. Compare Venus and Earth by explaining how they are similar and how they are different.

Suggested answer: Venus and Earth are similar because they are the same size. They are different because Earth has oceans and Venus does not, and Venus is much hotter than Earth. Venus is closer to the sun than Earth.