The Solar System: Our Closest Neighbors in Space

At the center of the Solar System is the **Sun**. The Sun is a star, just like many of the stars you see at night when you look up at the sky. It looks so bright during the day because it is much closer to Earth than the other stars.

The first planet is **Mercury**. Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest planet in our Solar System. It is covered in craters. The side that faces the Sun is very hot, but the side that faces away from the Sun is freezing.

The second planet is **Venus**. It is the hottest planet in the Solar System because of its thick and heavy atmosphere. It is often called Earth's sister planet because they are about the same size.

The third planet is **Earth**. The planet we live on is very special because it receives the perfect amount of light, heat, and energy from the Sun for life to exist. The **Moon** orbits Earth, and has lots of dusty craters and dark, smooth areas called maria.

The fourth planet is **Mars**, also called the "Red Planet" because of the red, rusty dust that covers its surface. We have sent many rovers, which are special robots designed to do science experiments, to study the surface of Mars.

In between Mars and the next planet is the **Asteroid Belt**, where many large rocks called asteroids orbit the Sun. Asteroids can be as big as 300 miles across or as small as a speck of dust.

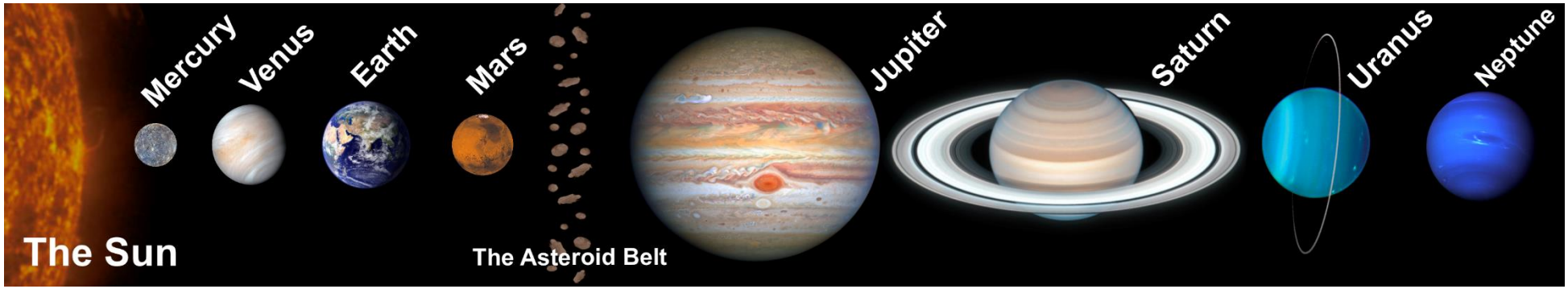
The fifth planet is **Jupiter**. Jupiter is the biggest planet in our Solar System. It is covered in storms. The biggest storm, called the Great Red Spot, has been raging for 400 years!

The sixth planet, **Saturn**, is famous for its beautiful rings. These rings are made up of small pieces of rock, dust, and ice. Saturn also has 82 moons, which is more than any other planet in the Solar System.

The seventh planet is **Uranus**. It is the coldest planet in the Solar System. It also has a beautiful ring. Scientists think a large asteroid crashed into Uranus a long time ago and tipped it on its side!

The eighth planet is **Neptune**. Neptune has faster winds than any other planet. It is almost 3 billion miles away from the Sun.

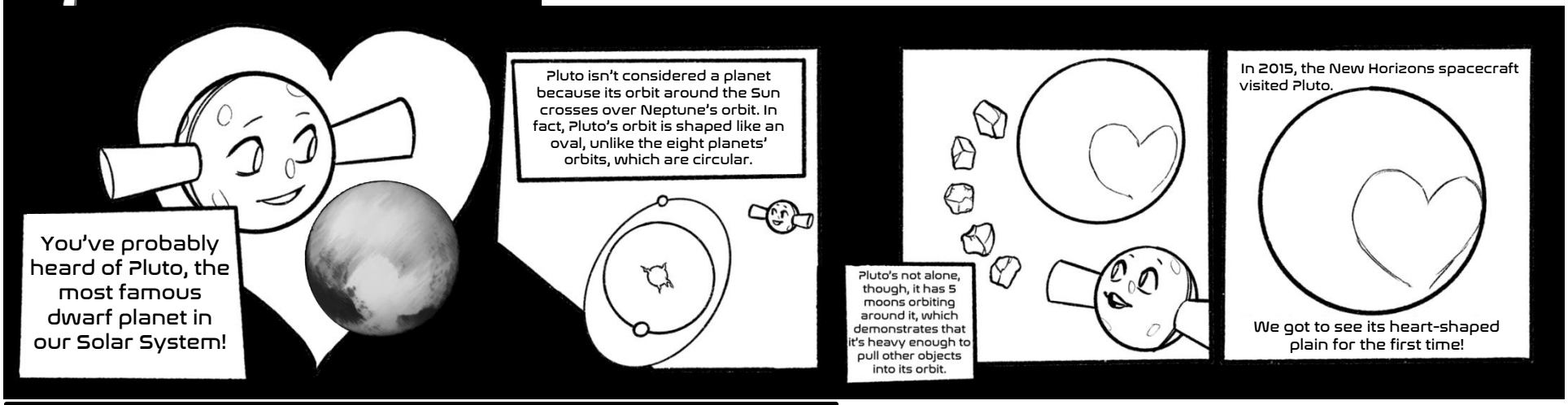
Our Solar System is home to one star, eight planets, hundreds of moons, and countless asteroids.



Konnie
THE STAR PROJECTOR

A FAR AWAY FRIEND

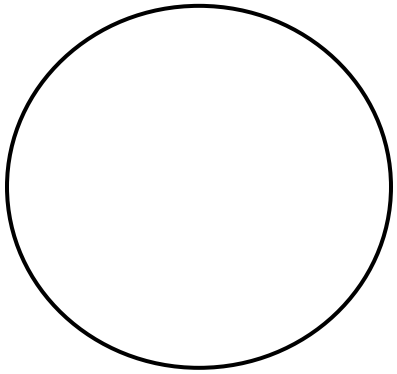
Konnie is the star projector in our planetarium. Color in her visit to the dwarf planet Pluto!



Design Your Own Planet

Use the planets in our Solar System for inspiration to draw your own planet below. Then, use the lines to describe your planet. Does it have rings? Is it a **terrestrial planet** or a **gas giant**? Is there any life there? How many moons does it have? What other facts can you think of?

My planet is called _____



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Planetary Puzzle

Fill in the blank with the answer for each clue. Then, write the circled letters in the right order below to find the answer to the question.

The closest planet to the Sun: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ (8, 9)

The eighth planet: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ (3, 6)

The Red Planet: ___ ___ ___ ___ (1, 2)

Orbits Earth: ___ ___ ___ ___ (5)

Found between Mars and Jupiter: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ (4, 7)

Question: What is the scientific study of the Universe called?

Answer: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)