

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT ARE CONSTELLATIONS?



The sky is full of stars. **Constellations** are groupings of stars. Constellations help to visually break the night sky into smaller pieces. The stars in a constellation may not actually be close together, but they can appear to form a pattern when viewed from Earth.

Stars were grouped into constellations by the early Greeks, as well as by other early cultures. These constellations were often named after characters from **mythology**. Many of the constellations were named after animals, heroes, and even villains from these legends of long ago.

**Astronomers**, or people who study the heavenly bodies, divided the stars into eighty-eight “official” constellations. These constellations form a kind of map of the sky, helping us to understand the placements of planets and other celestial bodies.

Farmers have historically used constellations to help them determine when they should plant and harvest their crops. Some constellations can be seen only during certain times of the year. By watching and waiting for these constellations, farmers were able to determine the arrival of spring long before the existence of calendars.

Navigators and early explorers used constellations to help them determine their location during their explorations. The part of the sky we see at night changes as the earth rotates. People looking at the night sky in different locations see stars and constellations differently. Even when they had no landmarks and were traveling without maps, early travelers could figure out where they were just by looking at the sky.

Learning about the night sky is fun and interesting. Look for the Big Dipper, Orion, or any of the other larger constellations on the next clear night, and you’ll be looking at the same things that curious people have been looking at for centuries.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT CONSTELLATIONS**

1. Which of the following sentences is true?
  - a. This passage is fiction.
  - b. The information in this passage is imaginary.
  - c. This passage is non-fiction.
  - d. Both a and c
2. Mythology is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. the study of heavenly bodies
  - b. the legends and stories from long ago
  - c. the visible stars on a clear dark night
  - d. none of these
3. The purpose of this passage was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. to persuade
  - b. to entertain
  - c. to inform
  - d. none of these
4. Navigators and early explorers used constellations to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. enjoy the night sky
  - b. write legends and stories
  - c. to find their locations
  - d. to revolve around the sun
5. Constellations \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. are imaginary
  - b. are groups of stars
  - c. are groups of navigators and farmers
  - d. both a and c
6. People from early cultures named constellations \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. for animals in their mythology
  - b. for villains in their mythology
  - c. for heroes in their mythology
  - d. all of these
7. Farmers used constellations \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. to know when to plant and harvest their crops
  - b. to write stories about heroes
  - c. to determine their locations
  - d. none of these

Use your research skills to learn about one constellation. What is the story about this constellation? When is it easiest to view? Have you seen this constellation?

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Name\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWERS TO *CONSTELLATIONS***

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. c
5. b
6. d
7. a