

Example Item 1

DOK Level: 4

English Language Arts (ELA) Grade 4 Content Domain: Writing and Language

In this section, you will read two different passages about space and planets. Then you will write an informational essay detailing the objects that are found in our night sky.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. "What's up in Space"
2. "The Milky Way Galaxy"

As you read the texts, think about what details from each you might use in your informational essay.

What's Up In Space?

Places in Space

Space is an exciting place! Our solar system is in space. It is made up of the sun and the eight planets that travel around the sun. Our solar system also has moons, asteroids, and other space objects.

In the Center

The sun is at the center of our solar system. The sun is a hot, bright star. A star is a ball of hot gas. It gives off heat and light. The sun is the star closest to Earth. That is why it looks different from other stars. Most stars look tiny and can be seen only at night because they are so far away.

Around the Sun

A planet is a large ball made of rock or gas. Eight planets make up our solar system. You live on one of them—Earth! The others are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. Each planet moves in a path around the sun. The path is called an orbit.

Around Earth

Earth has one moon. It travels in an orbit around Earth. The moon is made of rock. It is covered with deep holes called craters. The moon may look as though it gives off light, but it does not. It looks bright when it reflects light from the sun.

Space Facts!

- The sun is so large that it could hold a million Earths.
- Earth is called the Blue Planet because it is covered in so much water.
- Some planets have many moons. Jupiter has the most. It has more than 60 moons.

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune! Eight planets orbit, or revolve around, the sun. The planets and the sun are parts of our solar system.



Which planet is shown here?

The Milky Way Galaxy

The Milky Way is a huge collection of stars, dust, and gas. It's called a spiral galaxy because if you could view it from the top, it would look like a spinning pinwheel. The Sun is located on one of the spiral arms, about 25,000 light-years away from the center of the galaxy. Even if you could travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it would take you about 25,000 years to reach the middle of the Milky Way.

If you could see our galaxy from the side, it would look like a huge, thin disk with a slight bump in the center. This flat shape is caused by the galaxy spinning around. Everything in our spinning galaxy would fly off into space if it weren't for the force of gravity.

Without a telescope, we can see about 6,000 stars from Earth. That may seem like a lot of stars, but it's actually only a small part of the whole. If you think of the entire galaxy as a giant pizza, all the stars you can see from Earth fall within about one pepperoni on that pizza. In fact, for every star you can see, there are more than 20 million you cannot see. Most of the stars are too faint, too far away, or blocked by clouds of cosmic dust.



Milky Way as seen from the side

WRITING TASK

Our night sky is filled with many fascinating objects: planets, stars, and moons are just a few examples. Think about the ideas in the two passages. Then, write an informational piece about what you see when you look into the night sky. Be sure to use information from BOTH passages as you write a piece that informs or explains. Write your answer on the lines provided.

Before you write, be sure to:

- Think about ideas, facts, definitions, details, and other information and examples you want to use.
- Think about how you will introduce your topic and what the main topic will be for each paragraph.
- Develop your ideas clearly and use your own words, except when quoting directly from the passages.
- Be sure to identify the passages by title or number when using details or facts directly from the passages.
- You may use scratch paper if needed.

Now, write your informational piece. Be sure to:

- Introduce the topic clearly.
- Use information from the two passages so that your piece includes important details.
- Develop the topic in a clear order, with facts, definitions, and details related to the topic.
- Use linking words to connect ideas.
- Use clear language and vocabulary.
- Have a strong conclusion.
- Check your work for correct usage, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

