National Aeronautics and Space Administration

the Space Place

November – December 2013 / Vol. 6, Issue 5

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATORS

The Space Place is a NASA website for elementary school-aged kids, their teachers, and their parents.

It's colorful!
It's dynamic!
It's fun!

It's rich with science, technology, engineering, and math content!

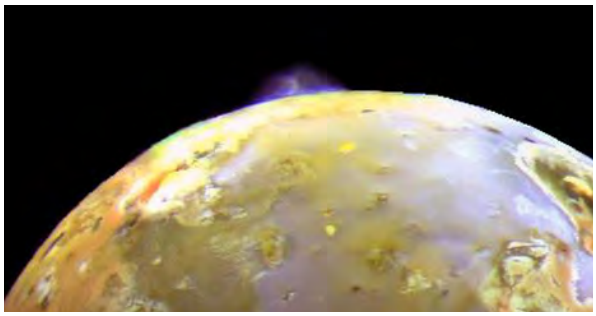
It's informal.
It's meaty.
It's easy to read and understand.
It's also in Spanish.
And it's free!

It has over 150 separate modules for kids, including hands-on projects, interactive games, animated cartoons, and amazing facts about space and Earth science and technology.

The Space Place isn't just a great place to find material for formal school lessons, it also has exciting hands-on activities and fun interactive web games for afterschool, too. Check out the "Do" and "Play" menus and start planning your afterschool activities today!

What's New? Space Volcanoes!

Did you know that there are volcanoes all around our solar system? From the dormant volcanoes of Mars to the mysteriously active cryovolcanoes of Saturn's Moon Enceladus, there's a whole lot of cool volcanism in our Solar System. Space Place has a new "Space Volcano Explorer" that lets students and teachers alike navigate through the solar system to find images and descriptions of some of the coolest volcanic features around. Check it out at http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/volcanoes. Want to learn more about volcanoes? Check out its new companion article "What is a volcano?" http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/volcanoes2.



Spotlight on Solar Fun

The sun is vitally important for literally every aspect of life, yet many students and educators know very little about how it actually works. Space Place's newest web game, "Solar Tricktionary," aims to fix that in characteristically silly fashion. In this game,

the student is given a term to define and four possible answers. Three of the answers are hilariously incorrect. Obviously solar wind is not "what happens when the sun eats too many beans," but at least students will be entertained as well as educated as they follow a chain of incorrect answers to the correct one. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/solar-tricktionary.

Spotlight on Comets

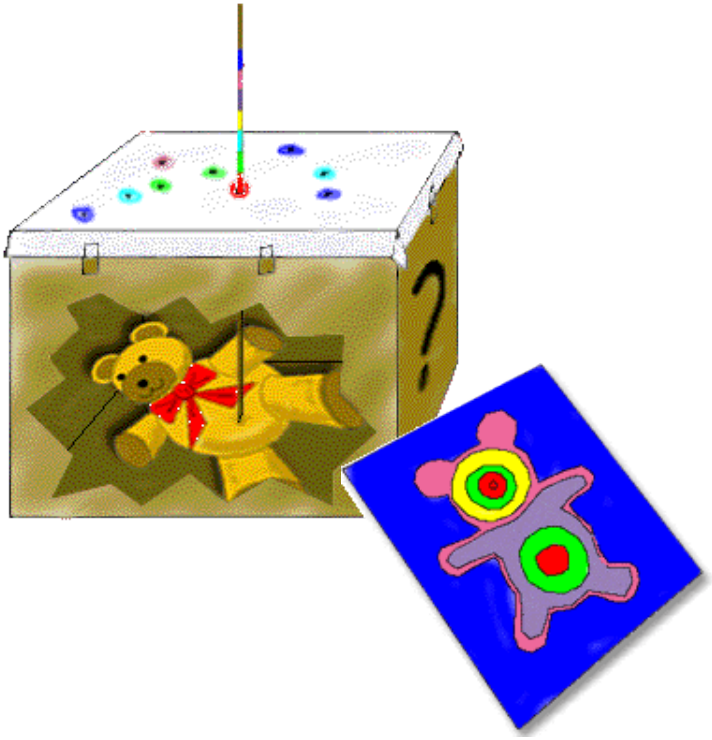
With Comet ISON fast approaching its brightest stage in our night sky in late November, now's a great opportunity to teach a little something about why scientists care about comets in the first place. One big reason is that the water in our oceans may have come from the ice that makes up comets. Space Place's article "Thirsty? Have a comet!" explains why scientists think this could be the case and how incredibly precise telescopes can actually identify subtle chemical clues to figure out where these ocean-forming comets could have come from. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/comet-ocean/.

For the Classroom

Not only a sun and a collection of planets, our solar system is full of small bodies like moons, dwarf planets, comets, asteroids, and meteors. Space Place has created a new four-page brochure, geared toward a middle-school-and-up audience, that explains what these smaller objects are, and why they are important for understanding our solar system's history. The brochure is formatted to be easily printed and can make a great addition to any teacher's bulletin board. Download it here: http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/posters#small-bodies.

For Out of School Time

Figure out what's inside a closed box by creating a hand-made topographic map of its contents. This clever activity is a fun way to keep students entertained and educated outside of the classroom. Have your students challenge each other to figure out what each of them put inside their boxes. As they get more and more invested, they will become intimately familiar with how topographic maps work in the first place. An important lesson that feels like a fun game. Take a look: http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/topo-bear/.



Special Days

November 3rd: Daylight Saving Time ends. How did timekeeping ever get started? http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/classroom-activities/#time.

November 7th: Marie Curie born in 1867. A physicist, she won a Nobel Prize for discovering two new elements. NASA has many women scientists. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/mission-chronicles.

November 9th: National Young Readers Day. Read and listen to Dr. Marc's answers to great questions about space. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/dr-marc-space.

November 17th: Leonid meteor shower at maximum early this morning. What causes a meteor shower? http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/meteor-shower.

November 28th: Thanksgiving Day. Did the pilgrims on the Mayflower navigate by the stars? With our starfinders, they could have. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/starfinder.

November 28th: Comet ISON makes closet approach to the sun. What's inside a comet anyway? http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/comet-nucleus/.

December 4th: Pioneer 10 flew past Jupiter in 1973. Play "JunoQuest," about a new mission to Jupiter. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/junoquest.

December 14th: Geminids meteor shower at maximum early this morning. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/meteor-shower.

December 25th: Christmas Day. If you get an iPad or iPhone for Christmas, we have some more gifts for you. http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/ios.

Send Feedback

Please let us know your ideas about ways to use The Space Place in your teaching. Send to info@spaceplace.nasa.gov.