

## What Is a Star?

When the Sun sets and the sky gets dark, stars can be seen in the night sky. Stars are large balls<sup>25</sup> of gas in space. The gas that makes up stars gives off heat and light. This heat and light is the same as the heat<sup>50</sup> and light that the Sun gives off. That is because the Sun is a star.

Stars are much larger than Earth. For example, the Sun<sup>75</sup> is 100 times larger than Earth. In space, there are many stars even larger than the Sun.<sup>92</sup>

## Stars of Different Colors

All stars give off heat and light. Stars of different ages give off different amounts of heat and light. The different<sup>25</sup> amounts of heat and light make stars different colors.

New stars give off the most heat and light. These stars are the color blue. Old<sup>50</sup> stars give off little heat and light. These stars are the color red. Stars that are between old and new are other colors, like yellow.<sup>75</sup> The Sun, which is a star that is between old and new, is the color yellow.<sup>91</sup>

## Stars at Night

Because the Sun is the nearest star to Earth, it blocks the light of other stars during the day. At night, people<sup>25</sup> can see many of these other stars. On clear and dark nights in North America, some stars can always be seen. One of these stars<sup>50</sup> is the North Pole Star.

To see large numbers of stars, people have to be far from the bright lights of cities. On dark and<sup>75</sup> clear nights in places far from cities, people can see as many as 2,000 stars.<sup>90</sup>

## Star Patterns

Long ago, people made patterns out of the stars in the night sky. One star pattern looked like a great bear. Another star<sup>25</sup> pattern looked like a little bear.

People began to tell stories about the star patterns they saw. They told these stories to their children. Their<sup>50</sup> children later told the stories to their own children.

Many of the names that people of long ago gave to these star patterns are still<sup>75</sup> used today. One star pattern is called the Great Bear. Another star pattern is called the Little Bear.<sup>93</sup>

## Shooting Stars

Sometimes, it looks like a star is falling very fast in the night sky. People call this a shooting star. However, shooting stars<sup>25</sup> are not stars at all.

What people call a shooting star is really a rock in space that is falling toward Earth. The white line<sup>50</sup> that people see is the space rock as it burns up in the air around Earth. These space rocks can be as small as dust<sup>75</sup> or as big as a car. Some people have found space rocks that have hit Earth.<sup>91</sup>