

Exploring Hercules - Activities (Ages 8-11)



Today we are going to investigate:

- How to find a famous summertime constellation
- The mythological story behind this constellation
- A deep space object in this constellation
- How long a signal from Earth will take to reach this object

Activities

- 1 Today we are going to look at a famous summer constellation called Hercules. Start up Night Sky and use the Space Travel tile to change the date to any evening in August and look south. Move the sky with your finger to see if you can find Hercules. (Tip: If you find this hard, try typing Hercules into Search). Some of the stars in Hercules trace out a shape called the “Keystone”.

Question: What is the name for four-sided shapes like this?

- a) Quadrilateral b) Pentagon c) Hexagon d) Octagon

- 2 In Greek Mythology, Hercules was a legendary hero who was famous for fighting monsters and other mighty deeds. He was said to be the son of a god so he had a special power.

Question: What was the power that made Hercules special?

- a) Super speed b) Flight c) Super Strength d) Invisibility

- 3 Turn on Glass Mythology to see how people in ancient times saw this constellation. You will see he is battling an enemy! It is a legendary creature called the Hydra. In the stories, the Hydra was an evil snake-like creature with many heads. If a head was cut off the Hydra, two more would grow in its place! This is why Hercules could not use a sword in the story where he defeated the Hydra.



Exploring Hercules - Activities (Ages 8-11)



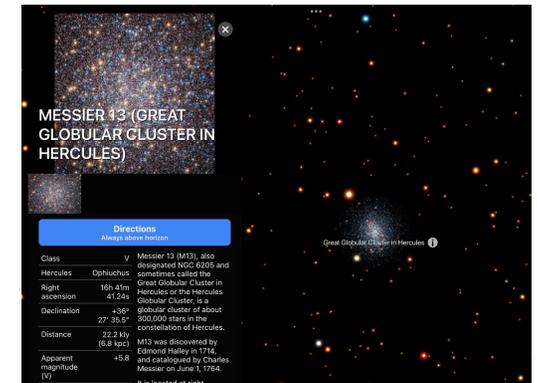
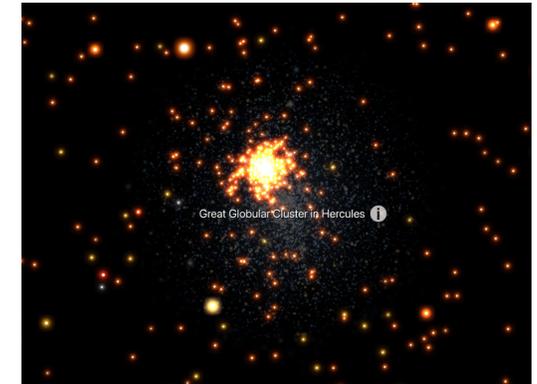
Question: Look at the artwork to see the weapon Hercules used to defeat the Hydra. What is it?

4 In legend, before Hercules fought the Hydra he had already defeated another ferocious beast. He took the beast's skin and wore it as a cape and hood. The animal had fought so fiercely it was honored with a constellation of its own.

Questions: From the image of Hercules, can you guess the name of this constellation? Can you find it in Night Sky?

5 Find the four central stars of Hercules again. Look at the right side of the Keystone, and find an object called the Great Globular Cluster in Hercules (also called Messier 13). This is a giant ball of stars very far away from us, zoom in on the Cluster to see for yourself that it is full of stars. You can find out more about the Cluster by tapping on the  to bring up an Information Tile.

Discussion Question: Use the Information Tile to find out about the "Arecibo Message". How many years will it take to reach the Cluster?



What we have discovered:

- Hercules is constellation seen in the summer
- It is named after a monster-hunting Greek hero
- Its four central stars are called the Keystone
- Messier 13 is a deep space object in Hercules

Well done!
You're a Night Sky
Superstar!