

Greek Mythology And The Constellations - Activities (Ages 8-11)



Today we are going to investigate:

- How the stars are divided into patterns
- Why the stars are grouped into patterns
- Why are constellations useful

Activities

- 1 Start up Night Sky and use your finger to move around the sky. Notice that there are lots of stars, some are bright and some are different colours. Look at the stars and imagine they are like a dot-to-dot puzzle where you have to join the dots to make a picture. Can you imagine the stars making a pattern in the sky?

Question: Do you know what we call patterns of stars?

- 2 People in ancient times also imagined they saw pictures in the sky. These pictures reminded them of creatures and characters from their legends and myths. Let's investigate the mythology of the ancient Greeks. Open the Main Menu by tapping on the ☰ icon. Go to the green settings cog ⚙️ near the bottom. Tap on Preferences and turn on Show Glass Mythology. Move the sky around and you will see pictures appear.

Questions: Can you find any of these mythological patterns, a Bear, a Bull or a Swan?

- 3 As you can see the Greeks had great imaginations! However often the mythology pictures don't really look like the star patterns underneath. Today we use a simpler method to group the stars into patterns using lines. To see the line drawings, open the Preference again, turn off Show Glass Mythology and turn on Show Constellation Lines. You will see the much simpler diagrams appear.

Question: Go back to the Bear, Bull and Swan again. Do these stars still look like the creatures?



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4 The constellations move during the seasons. In ancient times the constellations were used as a calendar. Farmers knew when to sow and harvest their crops based on the constellations they could see. Even though the constellations were made up long ago, scientists still use them today. They are used as an easy way to divide up the sky and today we have 88 official constellations.

Question: Using the Glass Mythology drawings can you identify the following constellations and answer these questions?

What is Orion the Hunter holding in each hand?
What type of animal is Orion protecting himself from?
What is Cassiopeia the Queen holding in her hand?



What we have discovered:

- Stars are grouped together to form patterns
- These patterns are called constellations
- Ancient Greeks imagined these to be creatures and characters from their mythology
- In ancient times the constellations were used as a calendar

Well done!
You're a Night Sky
Superstar!