

Exploring Gemini and Cancer - Activities (Ages 8-11)



Today we are going to investigate:

- Two well-known winter constellations
- The Greek mythology behind these star patterns
- How to find some of their bright stars and deep space objects
- Historical facts about these constellations

Activities


1 The pair of constellations we are going to investigate are easy to find in the winter sky. Start up Night Sky and set the sky view to an evening in February. Look to the southern sky and find the grouping of stars named Gemini. This constellation represents characters from Greek mythology.

Question: What does the constellation Gemini represent in Greek Mythology?

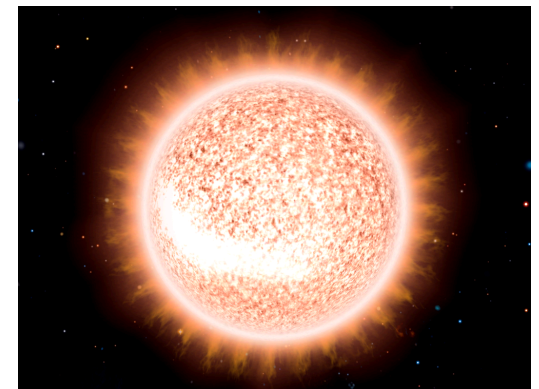
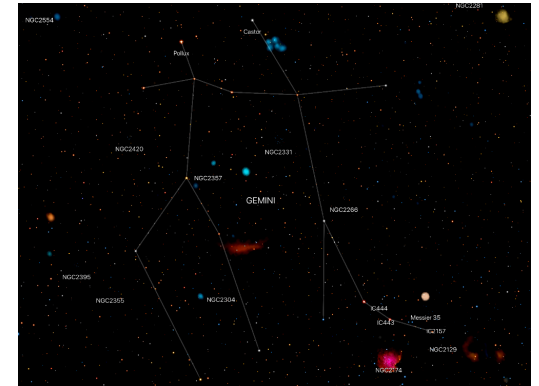
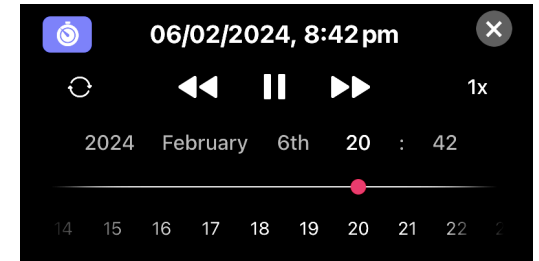
- a) The Hunters b) The Gemstones c) The Twins

2 The constellation celebrates two brothers from ancient Greek stories. The pair grew up to be heroes who sailed the oceans in search of adventure. Gemini's two brightest stars represent the heads of the pair.

Question: Can you identify the names of these two stars?

3 By tapping on the names of these stars you can bring up the  icon. Touching this brings up an information panel. Astronomers call planets found around distant stars "extrasolar planets" Use the information panels to find the answer to the question.

Question: Which of these two stars has an extrasolar planet?




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- 4 Moving a little downward and to the left you will find another star pattern called Cancer. In the Latin language, Cancer is the name of a little creature with pincer claws. In an ancient story the hero Hercules lost his temper when one of these creature pinched him on the heel, so a goddess placed the creature in the sky where it would be safe!

Question: What well know 'snippy' creature does Cancer represent?

- a) Lobster b) Crab c) Scorpion d) Crayfish

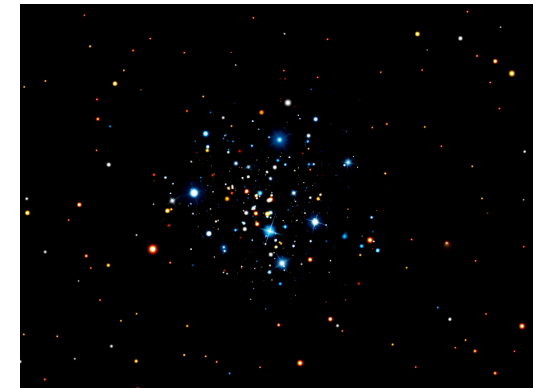
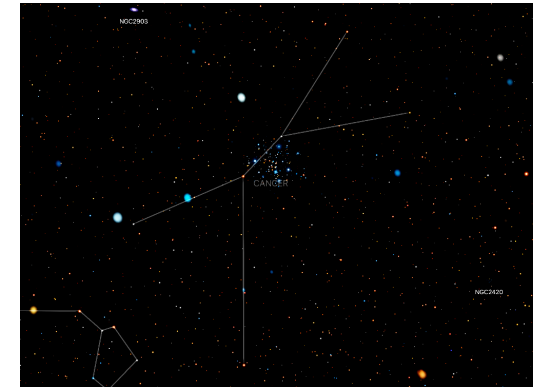
- 5 Zoom into the constellation Cancer to find a cluster of stars called the Beehive Cluster which has been observed by two historical astronomers. This cluster is well-named as it looks like a swarm of buzzing bees but another name for the Beehive Cluster is Praesepe. Find out more using the  information panel.

Questions: What does Praesepe mean?

Can you name both of these astronomers?

What we have discovered:

- Gemini and Cancer are best viewed in winter
- The Greek Mythology behind these well-known star patterns
- The two brightest stars in Gemini
- Some interesting facts about a bright deep space object in Cancer



Well done!
You're a Night Sky
Superstar!