

Exploring Hydra - Activities (Ages 8-11)



Today we are going to investigate:


- How to locate Hydra in the sky
- The brightest star in Hydra
- What is a planetary nebula
- Deep space objects in Hydra

Activities

- 1 Today we are going to explore a pattern that ancient people thought looked like a monstrous creature that was defeated by Hercules. Set the Space Travel tile to the evening of April 1 and find Hydra low in the sky.

Question: What creature do you think this pattern represents?

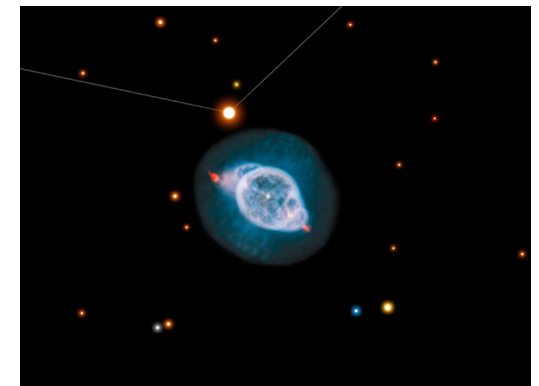
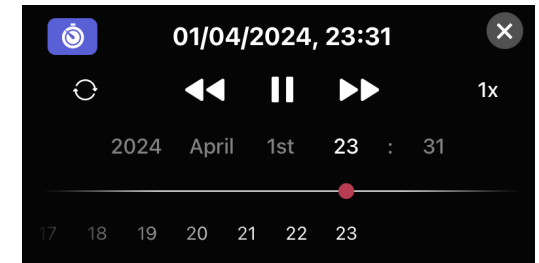
- a) Bear b) Turtle c) Water Snake d) Eagle

- 2 Hydra is the largest of all the 88 constellations but it has only one bright star, called Alphard. Locate this star and tap on the  for more information.

Question: The name Alphard means 'The Solitary One'.
True or false?


- 3 Although Hydra doesn't have many bright stars, it makes up for it with other deep sky objects. One of them is a type of object called a *planetary nebula*. These have nothing to do with planets but early astronomers with basic telescopes thought they looked like planets. Half-way along Hydra's body you will find a famous planetary nebula with a spooky name.

Activity: Locate and discover the name of this famous nebula.




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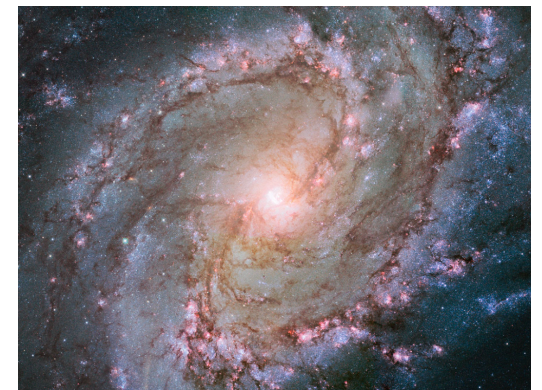
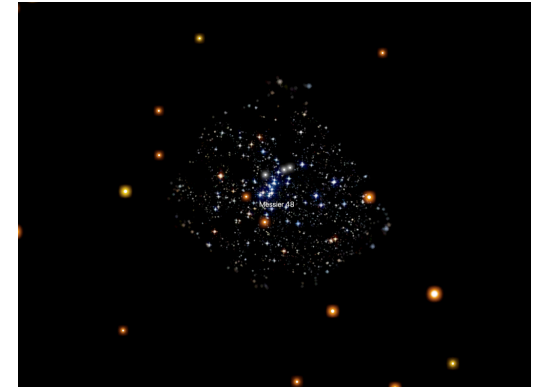


- 4 Hydra is home to a star cluster called Messier 48. You can find it by typing Messier 48 into the Search feature. When you find it tap on the  to bring up its Information panel. Astronomer Charles Messier is often credited with finding this object but many people think a pioneering female astronomer actually found it.

Question: What was the name of this astronomer?


- 5 Galaxies are giant islands of stars, dust and gas. There are many galaxies in Hydra, one of them is a beautiful spiral galaxy. This is Messier 83 which is nicknamed the Southern Pinwheel Galaxy. Find it using the Search feature and tap in on the  to bring up more information. Astronomers measure distances to far away objects in light-years.

Question: How many light-years away is Messier 83?



What we have discovered:

- Hydra is best viewed in the northern Springtime
- Hydra is the largest of the 88 constellations
- It has one bright star called Alphard
- Hydra is home to multiple galaxies and a planetary nebula

 Well done!
You're a Night Sky
Superstar! 