

Exploring Lyra - Educator's Guide (Ages 8-11)



At the end of these Night Sky activities students will understand:

- Lyra is a small constellation in the northern summer sky
- Vega in Lyra is the second brightest star in the Northern Hemisphere
- Vega is the closest star in Lyra to us
- The Ring Nebula is located in Lyra

Astronomy background information

Lyra means “Lyre”, and represents the ancient stringed musical instrument rather like a small harp. In mythology Lyra is meant to be the first lyre ever made by the musician Orpheus. Drawn as constellation lines Lyra is a parallelogram with a “handle” at one corner leading to the brilliant blue-white star Vega.

One of the brightest stars in the sky, Vega is a nearby star, only 25 light years from Earth. The other visible stars in Lyra are hundreds of light years from us. Compared to our Sun, Vega is twice as big and fifty times brighter. Vega and two other bright stars in other constellations, Deneb and Altair, make up the distinctive Summer Triangle asterism.

The Ring Nebula (also known as Messier 57) is a “planetary nebula”, a huge expanding cloud of gases blasted off an old and dying star. It is about 2300 light years away from us and based on the rate it is expanding must be 6000-8000 years old. Billions of years from now our Sun will create a similar nebula.

Night Sky App Essential Settings

Go to Night Sky Settings  and make sure the following Preferences are set.

Turn On these Effects:

Environment Based Horizons
Real Sky Representation
Show Glass Mythology
Stop Glass Mythology Melting
Show Constellation Lines
Stop Text and Lines Disappearing
Enable Messier Objects

Turn Off these Effects:

Show Satellites
Day Time Effect

Accessible Learning:

- Text size can be increased in the Preferences section
- Star numbers can be reduced by sliding two fingers down the screen

