

# Exploring The Bear Constellations - Activities (Ages 8-11)



## Today we are going to investigate:

- Where to look for the constellation of the Great Bear
- How to find Polaris
- Why Polaris is a special star
- The constellation of the Little Bear

## Activities

- 1 Today we are going to look at two very famous constellations. You can see them at any time of year. Let's start up Night Sky and find the first one. Look north and move the stars with your finger to see if you can find a giant bear in the sky. This is the constellation of the Great Bear.

**Question:** What is the proper name of this constellation?

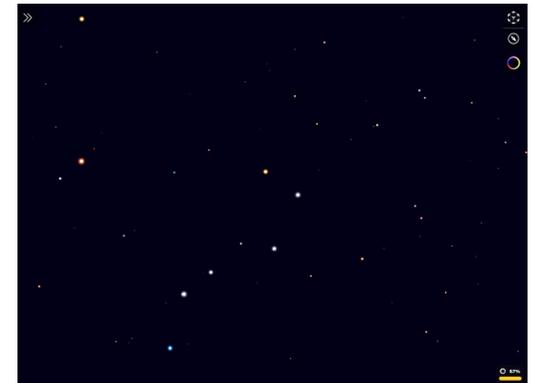
- a ) Taurus    b) Pegasus    c) Ursa Major

- 2 After a few seconds, the picture of the Bear will fade away. As it disappears find the stars in the Bear's tail and four of the stars in its body. You'll see these seven stars are the brightest stars in the constellation. People in countries around the world call this group of seven stars by different names.

**Question:** What are these stars called where you live?

- a) The Plow    b) The Big Dipper    c) The Drinking Gourd

- 3 Now we are going to find two stars that point to a special star. Together they are called the Pointer Stars but their names are Merak and Dubhe. Look for these two stars, you can tap on a star to make its name appear. (Tip: If the stars are hard to find, try typing their names into Search). Once you know where these stars are, follow an imaginary line between them up the sky until you reach a yellow star.



# Exploring The Bear Constellations - Activities (Ages 8-11)



**Question:** What is the name of this star?  
(Clue: the name means "Pole Star")

- a) Polaris    b) Sirius    c) Arcturus

- 4 This is a very special star because it is the only star in the sky that does not move. This means it can be used to find your way. If you look the star and compass directions, you will see it is to the north. If you can see it you must be looking north, so you can work out the directions of west, south and east.

**Question:** Why do you think it's called the Pole Star?

- a) People thought it was above Poland  
b) It is located in space above the North Pole  
c) People thought it was on top of a giant pole

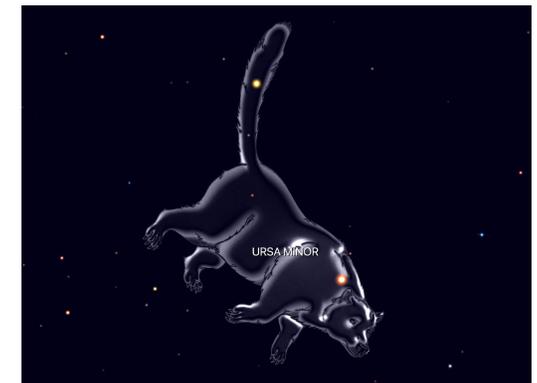
- 5 Look around this star to see the constellation it belongs to. This is the Little Bear. A story from ancient Greece tells of how this cub and his mother were put into the sky by a god to escape from hunters. If you look at the two bears you will see they look a little strange, see if you can use this to answer the next question.

**Question:** In mythology how do think the bears got into the sky?

- a) Pulled up by their ears  
b) By climbing a giant ladder  
c) Pulled up by their tails

## What we have discovered:

- Ursa Major is a northern constellation
- You can use two of its stars to find the star Polaris
- When you see Polaris you are looking north
- Polaris is in the constellation Ursa Minor



Well done!  
You're a Night Sky  
Superstar!