

STARS! STARS! STARS!

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by Bob Barner

Grades: K-4

Themes: Astronomy

Running Time: 8 minutes

SUMMARY

Children will dive into astronomy in this lively production that introduces the universe and all of its wondrous parts. With rhythm and shine, children will meet stars, planets, and constellations. Older children will be fascinated by the space-packed facts about the planets, meteors, shooting stars and the galaxy. This production is sure to inspire all students to look at the night sky with the wonder, curiosity, and thirst for knowledge that has excited star-gazers for centuries.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify constellations.
- Students will name the nine planets in our solar system.
- Students will keep a “Star Chart” that tracks the stars, planets, and constellations that they see in the sky.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Determine students’ background information about the universe. Guiding questions:

- What is a star?
- What is the sun?
- What is a planet?
- What planets do you know?
- What do you see when you look into the night sky?

Write down students’ answers on chart paper, and title it: “What We Know About the Universe.” Help students fill in missing information, such as what the nine planets in our solar system are, and that the sun is a star. Title another blank piece of chart paper, “What We Learned About the Universe.” Revisit this paper after viewing the movie.

Give students a homework assignment the night before viewing the movie. Have them go outside and draw the

sky as they see it. Provide them with black construction paper and a white or yellow crayon. Tell them to be specific and detailed, and to try to draw exactly what they see. Review this homework before viewing the movie. Have students compare drawings. Search for similarities and discuss what they might be.

Show students photographs or drawings of constellations. If possible, show them a photograph without the lines connecting the constellation first. Ask students if they can see any pictures or figures made from the shapes of the stars. Draw lines to represent the students’ suggestions. Then, show students how early people viewed the stars and the pictures that they saw. Explain that different cultures saw stars differently. Compare the constellations of two cultures, such as the Native Americans and the Greeks or Romans.

Teach students about the nine planets in our solar system. Use a phonemic device, such as: “**My Very Educated Mother Just Showed Us Nine Planets,**” to help them remember the order of the planets. Have students make drawings or models of the solar system in which each planet is labeled.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Revisit the list started before viewing the movie, “What We Learned About the Universe.” Have students brainstorm what they learned from the movie and transcribe it onto the chart. After generating a list of what students learned, read it back to them. Ask students to listen for the most amazing or interesting fact on their list. Then, divide the students into small groups of 2-3. Assign one amazing fact to each group and have the students work together to illustrate a poster of that fact. Display the students’ work in the classroom.

Create a planetarium in the classroom. Buy glow-in-the-dark stick-on stars from a craft store. Study pictures of constellations and as a class pick one or two to recreate in the classroom. Have the students draw a map or plan

of the constellation on craft paper, adding glow-in-the-dark stars to the appropriate parts of the constellation. (This will look good if done on black or dark blue paper). Then, hang the constellation on the ceiling of the classroom. Invite students and parents to a special “Planetarium Night” at the school.

Take a field trip to a local planetarium. Try to find out if the planetarium offers any special programs for younger star-watchers. Some planetariums even have observatories with high powered telescopes that are open to the public. Check with a local university for more options.

Have students make a personal “Star Chart.” The Star Chart should have several spaces to answer the following questions:

- Date I saw the star, planet, or constellation:
- Drawing of the star, planet, or constellation I saw:
- Where I was when I saw it:
- Did I see it through a telescope?
- Details I noticed:

Give students the assignment to star-gaze each night and record their observations on this chart. Have them compare their charts in class for differences and similarities.

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