

e-lesson

Week starting 9th July 2007

1. Life on Mars?

This week's lesson takes a look at the planet Mars, often imagined by science-fiction writers as the home of an alien civilization. The first spacecraft to carry out experiments on the surface of Mars was NASA's Viking 1, which landed on the planet on 20th July 1976.

Level

Upper Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Ask students if they think we are 'alone' in the universe. What do they think of the supposed sightings of alien spacecraft? Are they familiar with any science-fiction stories about alien civilizations? Also ask what they know about the planet Mars.
2. Give each student in the class a copy of Worksheet A and ask them to consider the questions and choose an answer from the three options in each case. In some cases the students will probably have to make a guess.
3. Give each student in the class a copy of Worksheet B. Give them 5-10 minutes to read the text and find out how many of their answers to the questions on Worksheet A were correct. They should also look up new vocabulary, although many of the words that might be new to the students are in the glossary so you should decide whether or not to hand out the glossary.
4. Confirm the correct answers in open class.

Answers

1. b 2. a 3. c 4. b 5. c 6. b 7. a 8. c

5. Hand out Worksheet C and give the students another 5-10 minutes to match the fourteen definitions to the words or expressions in the text on Worksheet B. To make the exercise easier you could perhaps provide the first letter of the words or tell students in which paragraph the word appears. You might want to point out that some of the nouns referred to on Worksheet B are in their plural form in the text on Worksheet A

6. Check answers in open class.

Answers

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|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. galaxy (first) | 6. major (fourth) | 11. carry out (sixth) |
| 2. recur (second) | 7. threatening (fourth) | 12. reveal (sixth paragraph) |
| 3. hostile (second, fifth) | 8. land (sixth, seventh) | 13. remote-controlled (seventh) |
| 4. orbit (third) | 9. liquid (sixth, seventh) | 14. reality (eighth) |
| 5. with the naked eye (third) | 10. absent (sixth) | |

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/sci_tech/2003/race_for_mars/default.stm

A section of the BBC website devoted to the theme of 'Exploring Mars', comprising of a large number of texts and pictures. Appropriate for upper-intermediate level.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3050209.stm>

An article from the BBC website (2003) on 'our long-running fascination with the idea of Martian life'. Appropriate for upper-intermediate level.

<http://marsrovers.nasa.gov/home/>

Official website of the NASA mission that has put two 'rovers' on the surface of Mars. Appropriate for upper-intermediate level.