

Five planets line up "like string of pearls"

27th June, 2022



Five major planets in our solar system lined up in a row over the weekend in a celestial event called a conjunction. In many parts of the world, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn could be seen with the naked eye

(without the need for a telescope). The rare planetary conjunction was visible in clear skies before dawn. The AccuWeather website said the best time to view this event was about an hour before sunrise. Astronomer Professor Lucie Green described the event as being, "like a string of pearls spread out from close to the horizon". Professor Green was particularly happy at seeing Mercury, which is usually hard to spot. She said: "It is very satisfying [to] see this faint twinkling planet."

AccuWeather said a conjunction in this order would not be visible from Earth again for another 20 years. The next time it will happen will be August 2040. It said this planetary event was special because the planets appeared in the order they are positioned from the sun, with Saturn being the farthest away and Mercury the nearest. Another astronomer, Dr Diana Hannikainen, said the conjunction was noteworthy on Friday morning as a crescent moon accompanied the five planets. She said the alignment was a "delightful sight". The conjunction is rare because the five planets all have different orbits of the sun. Mercury takes 88 days to orbit the sun, while Saturn takes 29 years.

Sources: bbc.com / usatoday.com / cbsnews.com

Writing

Astronomy should be a school subject. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

planets / solar system / weekend / celestial event / Mars / dawn / pearls / twinkling / conjunction / order / Earth / astronomer / moon / sun / delightful / orbit / Saturn

True / False

- 1) The planets that were in line were small, unimportant ones. T / F
- 2) People needed a telescope or binoculars to see the planets. T / F
- 3) The best time to see the line of planets was early in the morning. T / F
- 4) An astronomer said she was happy she could see the planet Mercury. T / F
- 5) There will not be another conjunction for another 200 years. T / F
- 6) Saturn is the planet that was farthest away. T / F
- 7) A full moon joined the alignment of five planets. T / F
- 8) It takes Mercury 29 years to orbit the sun. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. major | a. coincided with |
| 2. celestial | b. daybreak |
| 3. naked | c. impressive |
| 4. dawn | d. planetary |
| 5. faint | e. charming |
| 6. positioned | f. rotation |
| 7. noteworthy | g. arranged |
| 8. accompanied | h. important |
| 9. delightful | i. unclear |
| 10. orbit | j. bare |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you know about the sun?
- c) Should humans try to get to planets like Saturn?
- d) What's your favourite phase of the moon?
- e) When was the last time you saw a delightful sight?
- f) How big is the universe?
- g) What are the benefits of studying astronomy?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the astronomers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Five major planets in our solar | a. a delightful sight |
| 2. a celestial event | b. before sunrise |
| 3. seen with the naked | c. twinkling planet |
| 4. about an hour | d. from the sun |
| 5. satisfying to see this faint | e. called a conjunction |
| 6. It said this planetary | f. orbit the sun |
| 7. in the order they are positioned | g. eye |
| 8. crescent | h. event was special |
| 9. She said the alignment was | i. moon |
| 10. Mercury takes 88 days to | j. system |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about our solar system?
- What's your favourite planet?
- How interested are you in celestial events?
- What do you know about Saturn?
- Do you prefer dawn or dusk?
- What do you think of looking at the horizon?
- How do you feel when you see stars in the sky?
- Would you like to see Earth from space?

Spelling

- in a ectslial event
- without the need for a ltcseoepe
- The rare ojucnctnoin was visible
- sraonomter Professor Lucie Green
- spread out from close to the irozhon
- see this faint wiktilnng planet
- this lnpteary event
- in the order they are oipoitnsed
- creuMry the nearest
- a rscecent moon
- ccmanapioed the five planets
- the lgamniert was a "delightful sight"

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. d	3. j	4. b	5. i
6. g	7. c	8. a	9. e	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Asteroids

You think asteroids are the most interesting things about space. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): black holes, planets or comets.

Role B – Black Holes

You think black holes are the most interesting things about space. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): asteroids, planets or comets.

Role C – Planets

You think planets are the most interesting things about space. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): black holes, asteroids or comets.

Role D – Comets

You think comets are the most interesting things about space. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): black holes, planets or asteroids.

Speaking – Space

Rank these with your partner. Put the most interesting things at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| • The moon | • Shooting stars |
| • The sun | • Black holes |
| • Asteroids | • Galaxies far, far away |
| • Comets | • Solar systems |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	T	5	F	6	T	7	F	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.