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NASA spacecraft hits asteroid in Earth-protection test – 29th September, 2022

Level 0

Hollywood makes movies about asteroids destroying Earth. NASA may soon be able to protect Earth. Its new spacecraft (DART) could change an asteroid's direction so that it doesn't hit Earth. DART crashed into the centre of the asteroid at 24,000 kph. We will find out in a few weeks if the asteroid's direction changed.

DART is the first of many "planetary protection missions". NASA joked about the death of the dinosaurs. It wants "a better chance than the dinosaurs had 65 million years ago". All the dinosaurs could do was to "look up and say, 'Oh asteroid'". NASA said we could protect ourselves from a dangerous asteroid.

Level 1

Hollywood makes many movies about asteroids hitting and destroying Earth. NASA may soon be able to stop asteroids. It tested a spacecraft that could change the direction of an asteroid so it doesn't hit Earth. It is called DART. It set off in November 2021 to crash into an asteroid. DART hit the centre of the asteroid at 24,000 kph. Scientists do not know if they have changed the asteroid's direction. They will find out in a few weeks when they get data.

NASA said DART was the first of many "planetary protection missions". It joked about the death of the dinosaurs. It said: "We want to have a better chance than the dinosaurs had 65 million years ago." It added that all the dinosaurs could do was to "look up and say, 'Oh asteroid'". NASA also said DART was a "new era for humankind". It said we could "protect ourselves from something like a dangerous, hazardous asteroid impact".

Level 2

There are many Hollywood movies about asteroids crashing into Earth and destroying us. The space agency NASA may have an answer to stop this happening. It tested a spacecraft that could change the direction of an asteroid so it doesn't hit our planet. The \$325 million spacecraft is called DART. It set off on its journey in November 2021. Its goal was to crash into an asteroid called Dimorphos. DART hit the centre of the asteroid at 24,000 kph on Monday. Scientists do not know if they have changed the asteroid's direction. They will find out in a few weeks when they get data.

It is the first time for humans to change the direction of an asteroid. A NASA spokesperson said DART was the first of many "planetary protection missions". He talked about the end of the dinosaurs. He said: "We want to have a better chance than the dinosaurs had 65 million years ago." He added that all the dinosaurs could do was to "look up and say, 'Oh asteroid'". NASA also said DART was a "new era for humankind". It said: "It's an era in which we potentially have the capability to protect ourselves from something like a dangerous, hazardous asteroid impact."

Level 3

Hollywood has made many sci-fi movies about asteroids crashing into Earth and destroying us all. The U.S. space agency NASA may have an answer to this end-of-the-world possibility. It has tested a spacecraft that could change the direction of an asteroid that might hit our planet. The spacecraft is called DART, which means Double Asteroid Redirection Test. The \$325m craft set off on its journey in November 2021. Its goal was to crash into an asteroid called Dimorphos. The mission was a success. DART collided with the centre of the asteroid at 24,000 kph on Monday. Scientists do not yet know if they have changed the asteroid's direction. They will find out from data they will get in a few weeks' time.

It is the first time that humans have tried to change the direction of a space object. NASA spokesperson Glen Nagle said DART was the first of many "planetary protection missions". He compared our chances of surviving an asteroid hit to the end of the dinosaurs. He said: "We want to have a better chance than the dinosaurs had 65 million years ago." He added that in pre-history, all the dinosaurs could do was to "look up and say, 'Oh asteroid'". Another spokesperson, Lori Glaze, said DART represented a "new era for humankind". She said: "It's an era in which we potentially have the capability to protect ourselves from something like a dangerous, hazardous asteroid impact."

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