



Activity 3: Astronomy in the Marketplace

The allure of astronomy is so strong that many companies have named products after astronomical objects. This activity allows students to compile a list of product names and develop new products using astronomical titles.

Concepts

Astronomy has influence outside the field of science.

Objectives

Students will:

- increase their familiarity with astronomical terms;
- observe and record astronomical terms used in unexpected places;
- infer why names are chosen for consumer products; and,
- use creative thinking skills to develop a commercial product and an advertising campaign.

Materials

- Large sheets of paper
- Astronomy Notebooks

Procedure

Advanced Preparation

This activity is best done over an extended period of time, but need not involve substantial amounts of class time.

1. Begin a discussion about the fascination with astronomy, asking students to list some common consumer products that have been named after astronomical objects. Here are some examples:

Automobiles: Ford Taurus, Mitsubishi Eclipse, Mercury Comet, Dodge Aries, Ford Galaxie, Nissan Pulsar, Toyota Corona, Chevy Nova and Subaru (Subaru is the constellation of the Pleiades in Japanese; the Subaru logo at the front of the car actually shows stars in the Pleiades star cluster.)

Other Products: Comet cleanser, Milky Way and Mars candy bars, Pulsar watches, Quasar televisions, and Galaxy carpets (with a spiral galaxy as a logo.)

2. After generating a short list, ask the students to spend the next few days looking around their homes, in local stores, in magazines and newspapers for as many products and business names they can find that are related to astronomy. They should record the name of the item and a description in their Astronomy Notebooks. Have them bring in any items they can and put them on display in the classroom.
3. Create a class list of the product names. Challenge the group to produce the longest list.
4. Discuss why astronomical names have an appeal for businesses. What quality of a product is emphasized by use of astronomical names or images?
5. Extend this activity and integrate it with language and visual arts by asking students to devise their own astronomically-named product. Students can write and illustrate an advertisement for their products. Have the students produce a package or sample of their new product, using common household materials. Ask them to write a paragraph extolling the virtues of their products, with emphasis on astronomical terms and images. Share their products and creative advertising campaigns in a class presentation.