

# The Milky Way

- ★ **On clear, dark nights**, the Milky Way can be seen as a pale glowing band that stretches right across the sky.
- ★ **The Romans were the first** to use the phrase Milky Way (Via Lactea). The ancient Greek astronomers called it the Milky Circle (Kiklos Galaxias).

*A small telescope will reveal some of the countless millions of stars that make up the Milky Way.*



- ★ **According to Greek myth**, the goddess Hera produced the milk in the Milky Circle to feed the infant hero Hercules.
- ★ **Some Native American peoples** regarded the Milky Way as the route taken by ghosts on their way to the land of the hereafter.
- ★ **The Inuit peoples of Alaska** and northern Canada saw the Milky Way as a pathway of glowing ashes that led weary travellers home.
- ★ **For Aborigines**, the patches of darkness in the Milky Way made a picture of a giant emu stretching across the heavens.
- ★ **Seventh-century Korean astronomers** marked the position of stars with black dots on white paper and they showed the Milky Way as a thick black band.
- ★ **Galileo was the first astronomer** to observe the Milky Way through a telescope and discover its true nature as 'congeries of innumerable stars.'
- ★ **The German philosopher Emmanuel Kant** (1724-1804) was the first to speculate that if the Milky Way was a galaxy of stars, then there might be other, more distant, 'Milky Ways' visible in the night sky.
- ★ **The astronomer William Herschel** was the first to draw a map of what the Milky Way might look like if viewed from the outside. His disc-shaped image became known as the 'grindstone' model.
- ★ **By studying** the distribution of globular clusters in the Milky Way, the American astronomer Harlow Shapely (1885-1972) was able to deduce that the Sun was located near the edge of the Milky Way.

**Name:****Date:****Read the text, then answer the questions.**

1. What did the ancient Greek astronomers call the Milky Way? Why is one name in brackets?

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2. What is the Milky Way? Who first discovered this and how?

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3. How has the author broken up the text? Why do you think he has done it in this way?

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4. What did Emmanuel Kant suggest?

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5. Why has the writer chosen to put some print in **bold**?

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6. How did Harlow Shapely work out where the Sun is in relation to the Milky Way?

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7. What order has the author followed in the text, and why?

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8. Describe another way of organising the points in this text.

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