

Name _____

Date _____

WHAT IS A PLANET? Answer Key

There wasn't a definition written for planet until 2006! According to the official definition, a planet is a celestial body moving in an orbit around a star that has no other bodies of similar size near it. When telescopes were invented and people began to look at the sky, they noticed some things they could see in the sky looked like stars, but acted differently. They appeared to be in different places at different times of the year. We later came to realize that these were the planets in our solar system.

We currently have eight planets and five dwarf planets in our solar system. A dwarf planet is an object that orbits around a star but is not powerful enough to have moved other objects away from it. Before 2006, there was another planet called Pluto. When scientists wrote out the definition of a planet, they realized Pluto did not fit. Pluto was renamed a dwarf planet in 2006.

Look at the astronomy words below. Use books or the internet to write a definition for each word.

star A star is a giant spheres of super hot gas.

orbit An orbit is the curved path of an object in space around another object.

mass Mass is the measurement of the total amount of material in an object.

satellite A satellite is an object which has been sent into space in order to collect information or to be part of a communications system.

moon A moon is an object that revolves around a planet.

dwarf planet A dwarf planet is an object that orbits around a star but is not powerful enough to have moved other objects away from it.