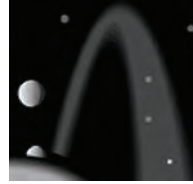


Why Does the Moon Orbit Earth?

Cross-Curricular Focus: Earth Science



The **moon orbits** Earth. When it orbits, it travels in a circle around Earth. There is a force between Earth and the moon called gravity. Because of gravity, larger objects pull smaller ones toward them. Earth is larger than the moon, so Earth pulls on the moon. At the same time, Earth is being pulled by the sun. The sun is larger than Earth. The balance between those two “pulls” is what keeps the moon in orbit around Earth.

People say the moon shines. However, the moon does not actually have any light of its own. What we see as its light is really the sun’s light reflecting off of the moon. As the moon orbits Earth, Earth orbits the sun. We see different amounts of light on the moon depending on its **position**. We call the changes in the moon’s appearance *Lunar phases*. From one new moon to the next new moon is one complete lunar cycle.

It takes the moon between 27 and 28 days to complete an orbit around Earth. The moon’s orbit is measured from one new moon to the next new moon. It starts in the west and moves toward the east. To complete one full orbit, the moon travels about 1,423,000 miles. The moon travels very fast. It moves at 2,288 miles per hour.

Name: _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don’t forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) What two **spheres** are being pulled by the force of gravity?

2) Why does Earth pull on the moon instead of the other way around?

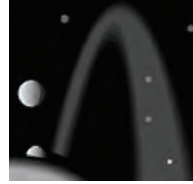
3) What’s really happening when the moon is said to shine?

4) Which moves faster, your family car or the moon?

5) Name one new thing that you learned about the moon or its orbit. _____

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Name: **Key** _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don’t forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

Actual wording of answers may vary.

1) What two **spheres** are being pulled by the force of gravity?

Earth and the moon

2) Why does Earth pull on the moon instead of the other way around?

because Earth is bigger than the moon

3) What’s really happening when the moon is said to shine?

The light from the sun is reflecting off the moon.

4) Which moves faster, your family car or the moon?

the moon

5) Name one new thing that you learned about the moon or its orbit. _____

student’s choice