

Exploring Our Galaxy (5th grade) Post-visit activities

Vocabulary List and Student Definitions (elementary level):

- **Sun-** the closest star to earth, our sun is a medium sized yellow star.
- **Galaxy-** a grouping of over 1 million stars, including the objects that orbit the stars.
- **Planet-** a massive sphere which orbits a star
- **Asteroid-** large chunks of rocks and metals which orbit the sun in the asteroid belt.
- **Comet-** large chunks of ice, dust, and gases which streak through space.
- **Moon-** a natural satellite which orbits a planet
- **Constellation-** a large group of stars which form a pattern in the night sky.

Wrap Up Activities:

1. I'm a comet!
 - a. Allow to students to revisit what they learned during their field trip while using their writing and language skills. Ask students to write a story titled "I'm a comet" in which they make the journey from Pluto towards the sun.
 - b. Students can describe themselves as the comet (physical characteristics), what they see and feel as they journey towards the sun, and the places the wish they could stay to explore.
 - c. If time allows, encourage students share their stories with others or create an illustration for their story.
2. Extreme Planet Makeover
 - a. Visit the NASA website for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and click on the "Education" tab. Next, click on the "fun stuff and games" section, or type in the link <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/kids/index.cfm>
 - b. Click on the game "Extreme Planet Makeover". This activity can be done as a group or as individuals.
 - c. Allow students to makeover earth by adjusting earth distance from a star, size of the planet, type of star nearby, and age of the planet. Discuss as a group how these characteristics affect the planet, and whether or not their planet could sustain life.
 - d. If time and resources allow, let each student download a picture of their planet to take home or post within the classroom.