



Practice making observations while creatively putting together a poem based on an astronomical object

Activity Overview

In this activity the participants are to write down as many words as possible describing an astronomical object in an image. The words should be adjectives, nouns, adverbs and verbs and be written onto small slips of paper. The slips of paper are then creatively arranged into the structure of a poem.

Preparation

Space: Large room/discussions space

Activity Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Gathering of materials and final preparations: Prior to leading this activity, you should have assembled all of the necessary materials.

Materials

- Several Hubble or Chandra images of various astronomical objects
 - Use Astropix to find beautiful NASA images: <https://astropix.ipac.caltech.edu>
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Slips of scrap paper, notecards, or post-it notes
- Tape

Background

This activity encourages the youth to look closely at astronomical images and use their imagination to create astropoetry! The act of looking at these images, and beginning to say something about the astronomical objects in the images, reinforces the first step in the image/data analysis process. Strengthening the participants' image analysis abilities is crucial when progressing into the observing project activities. Some examples of astropoetry are included at the end of this write-up.



Procedure

Discussion lead-in:

Explain to the participants that by looking closely at some images of astronomical objects, and using their imaginations, they will now create astropoetry! First model the process by providing an example. Hold up an image and say a few descriptive words that come to mind. Jot these words down on the slips of paper, and then explain that after the pairs of participants come up with about 30 words, they can then begin piecing together their poem.

Creating Astropoetry:

1. Break the youth up into pairs, and distribute the astronomical images, markers, and slips of paper. Wait on providing the chart paper so that they are not tempted to begin writing the poem before having at least 30 words needed to create a short poem.
2. Instruct participants to closely examine their image and write down on the slips of paper words that describe the image, and possibly what it reminds them of (e.g. marble, pancake, hula hoop). Mention that they should not come up with just adjectives such as bright, shiny, but nouns, adverbs, and verbs. Remind them to write down only one word per slip of paper or notecard.
3. Once they have 30 words on the slips of paper, have the youth arrange the words into a poem in any manner they like. Let them know that it is perfectly acceptable to add words such as: it, the, like, a, as, etc... to complete their sentences or phrases.
4. When the pairs have their words arranged into a poem that they are happy with, have them transfer the poem onto the piece of chart paper.
5. Tape the image onto the chart paper, be sure the youth have titled their poem and added their names. Then hang the astropoetry somewhere in the room.

Procedure:

Have the pairs recite their poems to the group. Participants should practice good oral presentation skills when they present their poems—speaking slowly, loudly, clearly, and not fidgeting or swaying. Often poems are read twice; have the partner read the poem through the second time.

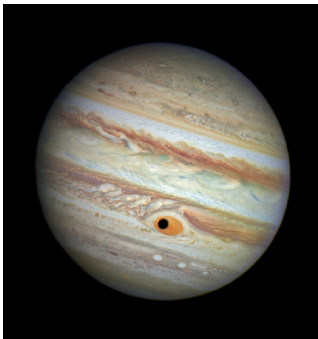
Follow up

Participants' poems can be typed up and included as a part of the second or third observing project if the image they chose relates to their project. Otherwise the activity can be done again with an image that the youth have taken or are using for their observing project. This activity can be done many times over the course of the program independently of other activities.

Watch out for...

Encourage both participants in a pairing to be hands-on when arranging the words into the poem. Also, inform the youth that they will be sharing their poems in front of the group. If you feel as though some groups may be hesitant to do so, break the youth into smaller groups when it comes time to share the poems. However, they should still work on the good presentation skills

Examples of Astropoetry



Jupiter

Perfectly exposed aerial view of a cup with moose-track ice cream in it
Dark mole on a gigantic face
A bright striped circular marble
Gold faded tire tracks towards the center of sphere with purple and red outlines

Credit: NASA, ESA, and A. Simon (Goddard Space Flight Center) Acknowledgment: C. Go and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA):
<https://astropix.ipac.caltech.edu/image/esahubble/opo1431b>

Antennae Galaxy

A magnificent, bright, red, fireball-like heart is moving
An exploding fuzzy dark aura of dust is expanding
Morphing blue and yellow fire are colliding to be an origin of stars
An evil shrimp is born

Credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA:
<https://astropix.ipac.caltech.edu/image/esahubble/potw1345a>

