

The Endless Sky

A package of rock and ice, a small world lost in the depths of space far beyond the planet of Pluto. No larger than a village, this world, which we call a comet, moves indolently around the Sun, this is so far away that it appears only as a bright star in its black sky. Suddenly, something maybe a passing star causes it to shift. Instead of moving around the Sun, the ball of rock and ice now moves in a new orbit that takes it closer to the solar system's central star. Over hundreds of thousands of years, the Sun brightens as the comet gets closer, passing Pluto and Neptune as it works its way inward. Jupiter's mighty clouds and storms gesture, but it ignores them in its relentless push towards warmth and the Sun.

Despite the fact that I had never seen a comet, when I had to choose a topic for sixth-grade public-speaking exercise in 1960, I chose comets. It was the first time I had ever given a speech in front of a group of people, and I was uneasy. I committed to memory every fact about comets that I could lay my hands on. The simple idea of their formation not only intrigued me but always inspired my imagination of the sky and space. The sky seemed like a painting, with streaks of pink, yellow and blue, gradually fading away, revealing the picturesque view of the night sky. The sky at night always seemed like diamonds which had been erratically thrown on a thick, endless, black sheet.

I had a garden shed which I transformed into an observatory, that night I began a slow search through the eastern sky sweep with Miranda, my sixteen-inch-diameter reflecting telescope, swinging the telescope north to keep as far from the Moon as possible. Not far from the bright star Alpheratz, my telescope stopped at a soft, fuzzy patch of light which entered the field view. I checked several atlases of the sky, but none suggested that any fuzzy spot belonged in that lonely area. By then it was dawn, and my observing had ended. Twenty four hours I looked again, and the spot was then in a different position. I had found a new comet, after being certain it was a new comet, I reported it to the international Astronomical Union, which maintains a clearing house for discoveries called the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams.

Reading Test:

Fluency: ___/5 Pronunciation: ___/5 Understanding: ___/5 Meaning: ___/5

Comments: _____

Q. Write and learn the spellings of the underlined words in the text.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

Q. Write the meanings of the following words in the spaces provided.

a. indolently _____

b. relentless _____

c. intrigue _____

d. erratically _____

e. picturesque _____

f. astronomical _____

Q. Answer the following questions to the text 'The Endless Sky' in full sentences.

a. What does the writer express his interest in?

b. How does the writer describe the nature of the comet?

c. What does the writer choose to speak about in his first public speaking exercise and why?

d. Why did the writer transform his shed into an observatory?

e. How did the writer identify a more unusual area?

f. How did the writer make sure his observation was correct?

g. Why did the writer report it to the International Astronomical Union?
