



Name _____ Date _____

Vocabulary

Asteroid

A small Solar System object composed mostly of rock. Many of these objects orbit the Sun between Mars and Jupiter. Their size can range anywhere from a few meters to several hundred kilometers in diameter.

Coma

The cloud that forms around a comet's nucleus. This cloud is made by solar wind striking the surface of the nucleus, causing a mixture of gas and dust to form around it.

Comet

A small Solar System object consisting of ice and other compounds. A comet will form a coma and sometimes a visible tail whenever it orbits close to the Sun.

Dust Tail

This type of comet tail forms when the solar wind separates dust from the coma, pushing it away from the Sun in a slightly curved path.

Gas-Ion Tail

This type of comet tail forms when the solar wind separates gases from the coma, pushing them away from the Sun in a straight path.

Inner Solar System

The path of the Solar System between the Sun and the orbit of Jupiter.

Meteor

The flash of light that we see in the night sky caused by the friction of a meteoroid passing through the atmosphere.

Meteor Shower

Many and sustained flashes of light that are seen in the night sky as a result of the Earth passing through the former path of a comet. The debris released by the comet causes the meteor shower.

Meteorite

Any part of a meteoroid that survives its fall through the atmosphere and lands on the Earth.

Meteoroid

An interplanetary chunk of matter that is smaller than a kilometer in diameter and most frequently measured in millimeters.

Naked-Eye Visibility

Being able to see a celestial object, such as a comet, without the aid of telescopes, binoculars, or other astronomical devices.

Comet Nucleus

The solid, rocky part of a comet.

Orbit

The path followed by one celestial object around another celestial object, such as Earth's path around the Sun or the Moon's path around Earth.

Period

The time needed for one complete trip or cycle. For example, the period for the Earth to travel around the Sun is 365 days.

Solar Wind

A stream of charged particles ejected from the surface of a star.

