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UNIT 1

Little Green Shoots on Mars

火星上长出了小嫩芽

科学家们不断地为人类在太空中寻找新的家园。无疑，火星因其与地球极相近的环境而成为首选。但是，火星上的土壤是否也能长出像地球上一样的植物来供养人类迁居火星后的食物需要呢？

Words to Watch

Martian adj. 火星的

inclement adj. 险恶的，
严酷的

meteorite n. 陨星，陨石

asparagus n. (植)芦笋

phosphate adj. (化)磷酸盐的，
含磷酸盐的

cereal n. 谷类食品，谷类

galaxy n. 星系

sniff v. 用力吸，嗅

microscopic adj. 用显微镜
可见的，精微的





Scientists have successfully raised a crop of fresh greens on Martian soil, significantly boosting the possibility that there is, or at least could be, life on the Red Planet.

The experiment has not taken place on Mars itself — where the temperature is rarely warmer than an inclement minus 60°C — but in a laboratory in New Zealand. Taking soil samples scraped from meteorites¹ which fell to the earth from the planet thousands of years ago, a team of researchers have grown tiny asparagus and potato plants.

In comparison with soils from other planets, the samples show high levels of phosphates²—necessary for growing good vegetables. The best results came from scrapings from a meteorite that landed in Australia in 1969 which soil fertility indicators showed had similar properties to the soil on the earth.

If we build colonies in space we will have to grow plants for food, so obviously we need to know that the soil can support that. It shows that space-based soil could potentially support future human expansion in the solar system, said Dr. Michael Mautner, leader of the research team.

It took Mautner and his colleagues only a few weeks to grow shoots several millimetres high. Previously whole crops have been raised on space stations. Cereals planted in space on orbiting units have even produced fertile seeds. Professor

Colin Pillinger of the Open University said the new research confirms previous work with Martian soil.

Pillinger himself has replicated the red planet's soil on the earth and planted seeds in it. "We grew





some lovely vegetables: peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes and so on. We exhibited them at Chelsea Flower Show and won a gold medal." he said.

The Open University team's research has shown it is possible to extract water from Martian rocks. "Everything is there for life except the life itself," said Pillinger, who believes humans will live on Mars within 30 years.

Scientists may eventually be able to plant some forms of life throughout the galaxy, seeding distant planets to test if they could support life. The New Zealand experiment has shown materials from interplanetary dust, meteorites and comets could have helped trigger life on the earth. One theory is that organic compounds and whole cells could have been transported across galaxies by comets made of ice. If materials in the meteorites could grow potatoes then they could have provided the first micro-organisms with nutrients needed for survival.

Britain's first landing on Mars, with a tiny robot explorer called "Beagle Two" is scheduled for Boxing Day⁴ 2003. The 60kg unit will land on the surface of the planet and "sniff" for organic chemicals associated with water and life and, presumably, little green men.

Two weeks ago scientists at the American space agency NASA⁵ said a four-year study of a Martian meteorite that was discovered in Antarctica in 1984 had concluded that it contained microscopic magnetic crystals that were identical to grains produced by bacteria on the earth.

The crystals are so similar that anyone studying the meteorite who did not know that it came from Mars would almost certainly conclude that it held evi-





dence of life, the scientists who made the discovery said. The meteorite is about 4.5 billion years old and has lain in the Antarctic ice for 13 000 years. The vital crystals are so small that a billion of them would fit on the head of a pin.

Notes

1. meteorite: 陨星或称为陨石是从外层空间坠落到地球表面的大块石头或金属物质。

2. phosphate: 磷酸盐 (也称磷酸酯), 是植物生长所需的重要养分。

3. Beagle Two: beagle 是 (英国种的) 小猎兔犬, 此处是指英国的航天探测机器人“猎犬 2 号”。

4. Boxing Day: 圣诞节的次日, 是英国的法定假日, 按英国俗例, 是日应向邮递员和雇员赠送礼物 (又称节礼), 故称节礼日。

5. NASA: National Aeronautics and Space Administration. (美国) 国家航空和航天局

Exercises

1. Reading comprehension

1) What is the main purpose of the research team in New Zealand for growing vegetables on Martian soil?

A. To test if vegetables grow better on soil containing high levels of phosphates.

B. To see if vegetables can grow at the temperature of minus 60°C.

C. To exhibit them at Chelsea Flower show in order to win a gold medal.

D. To prepare for the future human expansion on





Mars.

2) How many Martian meteorites falling to the earth are mentioned in the passage?

- A. 3 B. 4 C. 2 D. 5

3) The task of Britain robot “Beagle Two” is to _____.

- A. look for water, life and little green men on Mars
B. try to extract water from Martian rocks
C. test the Martian soil to see if it is suitable for life
D. look for chemical substances related to cells and water

4) The study of the scientists at the American space agency NASA indicates that _____.

- A. life on Mars contains smaller cells than life on the earth
B. the crystals are very likely to be produced by life on Mars
C. the crystals are produced by the Antarctic ice after the meteorite's lying in it for 13000 years
D. scientists are going to use the crystals to ornament the head of a pin

5) The main purpose of the author is _____.

- A. to inform us that humans will live on Mars within 30 years
B. to tell us some details about the research made on Mars
C. to let us know the latest scientific discoveries about Mars
D. to show us the evidences that there is, or at least could be, on Mars

2. Choose the word or phrase that is closest in meaning to the italicized word(s) in each sentence.

1) Soil fertility indicators of the Martian meteorite had similar properties to soil on the earth.

- A. possessions B. estates
C. characteristics D. fortunes





2) Cereals planted in space on orbiting units have been produced fertile seeds.

- A. reproductive B. numerous
C. fatty D. high-quality

3) The new research confirms previous work with Martian soil.

- A. witnesses B. verifies
C. admits D. shows

4) Prof. Pillinger has replicated the red planet's soil on the earth and planted seeds in it.

- A. collected B. replaced
C. imitated D. reproduced

5) The research has shown it is possible to extract water from Martian rocks.

- A. abstract B. remove
C. exploit D. purify

6) Scientists may eventually be able to plant some forms of life throughout the galaxy.

- A. evidently B. likely
C. incessantly D. ultimately

7) Most Scientists believe the Martian meteorite hold evidence of life.

- A. look B. sign C. notice D. observance

8) The vital crystals are so small that a billion of them would fit on the head of a pin.

- A. energetic B. live
C. significant D. vigorous





3. Choose the best answer to complete each of the following sentences.

1) How many satellites have been put into _____ around the earth?

- A. motion B. circulation
C. orbit D. way

2) The _____ of his business interests was due to his wife's whole-hearted support.

- A. extend B. reduction
C. expansion D. extent

3) The product has even more _____ in export markets.

- A. competition B. potential
C. challenge D. capability

4) She was surprised to see that this oil-painting was _____ to one her mother has.

- A. equivalent B. resemble
C. the same D. identical

5) The pilot managed to _____ the damaged plane on the lawn.

- A. land B. descend C. lower D. perch

6) The riots were _____ off by a series of police arrests.

- A. broken B. stimulated
C. triggered D. excited

7) The cure for stress _____ learning to relax.

- A. results in B. lies in
C. brings about D. accounts for

8) The play was badly acted _____ being for too long.

- A. except B. except for
C. in addition D. besides





Reading for Fun

Two guests were chatting at a cocktail party when one of their wives walked past. “Your wife certainly brightens the room,” one man said to the other. “Her mere presence is electrifying.”

“It ought to be,” the other man replied. “Everything she’s wearing is charged.”

Keys

1. 1) D 2) A 3) D 4) B 5) D

2. 1) C 2) A 3) B 4) D 5) A 6) D 7) B 8) B

3. 1) C 2) C 3) B 4) D 5) A 6) C 7) B 8) D

参考译文

科学家们已经成功地在火星的土壤中培育出了一批嫩绿的植物，这一成功在很大程度上增加了那颗红色行星上存在着生命，至少是曾经存在过生命的可能性。

这个实验并未在火星上进行，而是在新西兰的一个实验室里进行的——因为火星上的温度并不比我们地球上寒冷的摄氏零下 60 度高多少。一组研究人员取来上千年前从火星上陨落到地球上的陨石，从上面刮落下来土壤样本，并已在其中种植出了小芦笋和马铃薯之类的植物。

同其他行星上的土壤相比，这些土壤样本显示出它的磷酸盐含量很高——而磷酸盐是蔬菜茁壮生长的必要养分。最佳检测结果来自于 1969 年陨落到澳大利亚的一块陨石上刮削下来的土壤碎屑，这些碎屑中所显示的土壤肥料指标有着和地球上土壤相似的特征。

如果我们要在太空中建立新的侨居地，我们就得种植植物以获得食物，显然，我们就需要知道那里的土壤是否适用于种植。这个研究小组的负责人迈克尔·莫特尔博士说，这些源自太空的土壤为未来的人类在太阳系里进行扩张提供了可能性。





莫特和他的同事们只花了几周的时间就培植出了几毫米高的小嫩芽。在此之前，所有的作物都是在太空站里培育和种植的。在太空中沿轨道运行的太空飞行器上种植的谷类植物甚至已经结出了可繁殖的种子。开放式大学的科林·皮林格教授说，这项新的研究进一步证实了先前利用火星土壤种植作物的工作。

皮林格本人在地球上仿制了红色行星上的土壤并在其中播下种子。他说：“我们种了一些可爱的蔬菜：如胡椒、黄瓜、西红柿等等。我们把它们拿到切尔斯花卉展览会上去展示，并获得了一枚金质奖章。”

开放大学的这一小组的研究表明从火星的岩石里提取水分是有可能的。皮林格相信人类将在 30 年内移居到火星上去居住。他说：“火星上除了生命本身之外，生命所需要的一切都具备了。”

科学家们最终也许能够在星系间培植出几种生命形式，同时在遥远的行星上播下种子以检测它们是否能够维持生命。在新西兰进行的实验表明来自于星际尘埃、陨石和彗星的物质也许帮助了地球上生命的出现。一种理论认为有机合成物和所有的细胞可能都是通过由冰组成的彗星穿越星系时被运送而来的。如果陨石里的物质可以种出马铃薯，那么它们也就可以为第一批微生物提供生存所需要的营养和养分。

英国的首次火星登陆计划安排在 2003 年节礼日那一天，此次火星登陆船将携带一个被称做“猎犬二号”的微型探测机器人。这个 60 公斤重的机器人将在火星表面着陆，然后去“嗅出”与水与生命，也有可能是与小绿人有关的有机化学物质。

两周前，美国太空研究机构国家航空和航天局的科学家们说，对一块于 1984 年在南极洲被发现的火星陨石进行了四年的研究后发现，陨石中所含的用显微镜才可看见的磁性结晶同地球上的细菌所生成的结晶颗粒是相同的。

获得这一发现的科学家们说，这些结晶是如此相似以至于任何一个并不知道这块陨石是来自于火星的人在研究这块陨石时，都几乎肯定会得出它是生命存在的证据的结论。这块陨石的年龄大约有 45 亿年，已经在南极洲的冰层下沉睡了 13 000 年。那些有生命力的结晶体是那样的小，以至于于一枚大头针的针头上可容纳 10 亿个这样的晶体。





UNIT 2

How to Identify the Planet 如何辨认行星

美丽的夜空浩渺无际，无数颗星星在夜色中闪烁着光芒。它们有的静止不动，有的游移不定。你能认出哪颗是恒星，哪颗是行星吗？本文将教给你一些辨认它们的方法。

Words to Watch

deity n. 神

Mercury n. 水星

Mars n. 火星

Saturn n. 土星

antiquity n. 古代

beacon n. 烟火，灯塔

mythology n. 神话

hue n. 颜色，色彩

ruddy adj. 红色的，
红润的

constellation n. [天]星群，星座

Venus n. 金星

Jupiter n. 木星

ecliptic n. [天]黄道

horizon n. 地平线

cobalt-blue adj. 钴蓝色的

luster n. 光彩，光泽

nonetheless adv. 虽然如此，但是

tint n. 色彩

All the stars that are visible in our night sky are





hurtling through space at speeds that can be measured in miles per second but are so far away that their distances are measured in light years. To us, they appear to have no motion relative to each other. We call these “fixed” stars.

But the planets, as measured by star distances, are practically next-door neighbors. A planet, moving between the earth and the remote and seemingly immobile stars, will soon betray its motion. To ancient sky-watchers, this ability to move may have had a magical, god-like quality. The word “planet” is derived from¹ a Greek word meaning “wandering star.” And evidence that the planets were associated with the gods lies in their very names, which — other than Earth — represent ancient deities.

Planets are usually banned from star charts in most astronomy books because they have no fixed residence: they indeed appear to wander around among the constellations². Of the sun’s nine planets (including our own earth), five can be readily seen in our nighttime sky without optical aid: Mercury³, Venus⁴, Mars⁵, Jupiter⁶ and Saturn⁷.

Fortunately the sun, moon and planets always travel along a known path, through the constellations, and never stray far from an imaginary belt or zone in the sky known as the ecliptic⁸. There are thirteen recognized constellations — star patterns crossed by the ecliptic. You can be quite sure that if you find a bright “star” in a constellation that is not usually included on star charts, that “star” is almost certainly a planet. Your daily newspaper, usually on the weather page, may provide a listing for the “evening stars” and “morning stars” for that period.





The expression dates back to⁹ antiquity because an evening or morning star is never a star at all; it is always a planet. You can also distinguish a planet from the stars by their steady light, for they seem to twinkle less than true stars.

MERCURY in old Roman legends, was the swift-footed messenger of the gods. The planet is well named, for it is the swiftest of the sun's family, making its yearly journey in only 88 days. Mercury appears to us like a yellowish-orange star. The second smallest and nearest planet to the sun, it gives us a chance to see it only in the limited times when it hangs low above the horizon just after the sun has set or just before the sun rises.

VENUS is by far the brightest of the planets and far outshines nighttime stars. To see it as a brilliant white beacon against a cobalt – blue twilight sky is a beautiful sight...likely the reason why it is named for the Roman goddess of beauty. It's an almost earth-sized planet wrapped in white cloud. It rarely appears very high up and usually shines either above the western horizon after sundown as an evening star or above the eastern horizon before sunup as a morning star. At times we can see Venus for more than three hours before sunrise or after sunset. But don't bother looking for Venus in the middle of the night.

JUPITER is not quite as brilliant as Venus, but also far brighter than the nighttime stars. In Roman mythology, Jupiter was considered the supreme god and its planetary namesake could appear high, low, east, south or west, at any hour of the night. It seems to stay in one constellation for nearly a year as it moves slowly along





its course. Jupiter's orbit is so large that the planet takes nearly 12 times long of our years to make a round trip.

MARS and SATURN follow schedules similar to Jupiter. Saturn never gets as bright as Jupiter but always ranks among the brightest stars in luster. It appears to move very slowly among the stars. Its year — the time it takes to circle our sky — is 29 times of our years, far longer than the other naked-eye planets.

Mars takes nearly two years to circle the sun and can vary greatly in brightness, depending on its distance from the earth. Often it can appear brighter than Saturn can and at rare times the case it can rival even Jupiter. Conversely, it often can dim down to the brightness of Polaris, the North Star. Nonetheless, whether it appears bright or dim, you can always tell Mars by its yellowish-orange hue. Popularly referred to as the “Red Planet,” the ruddy tint may have suggested the color of blood and likely gave rise to¹⁰ the planet being named after the Roman god of war.

Notes

1. be derived from: 来自, 源自, 出自于……

2. constellation: 星座是一个看上去像图形或图案的任意恒星群系, 尤指已被确认的 88 个星座。

3. Mercury: 【罗神】墨丘利(诸神的信使神; 掌管商业的神); 【天】水星

4. Venus: 【罗神】维纳斯(掌管爱和美的女神) 【天】金星, 太白星

5. Mars: 【罗神】战神, 【天】火星





6. Jupiter:【罗神】(主神)朱庇特,【天】木星

7. Saturn:【罗神】农神,【天】土星(略作 Sat.)

8. ecliptic: 黄道是地球运行轨道与天球的交界面,在地球上
看,太阳似乎沿着黄道运行。黄道线是地球仪上刻着的大圈,与
赤道平面大致成 $23^{\circ}27'$ 的角。

9. date back to: 追溯到……

10. give rise to: 引起; 导致

Exercises

1. Reading comprehension.

1) _____ can help us identify the planets from the stars.

- a. Their distances from the earth
- b. Whether they can be seen without telescopes
- c. Whether they are associated with the gods
- d. Their motion in the sky
- e. Whether they have fixed residence or not
- f. Whether they are in front of any constellations
- g. Their steady light

A. a b c g B. a d e g

C. a d e f D. a e f g

2) _____ is not the sun's planet.

A. Polaris B. Jupiter C. Earth D. Saturn

3) Earth's year is equal to about _____ Mercury's years.

A. 4 B. 5 C. 3 D. 8

4) Which of the following is mentioned in connection with
Mars?

- A. It has the largest orbit among the sun's planets.
- B. It can be seen every morning before sunrise.
- C. It moves more slowly than Jupiter.





D. Its year is twice of that of the earth.

5) It is inferred but not stated in the passage that _____.

A. Mercury can be seen with naked eyes

B. planets belong to certain constellations

C. some daily newspapers usually publish when certain planets appear in the sky above this region during certain periods.

D. Venus resembles a white beacon in the dark blue sky

2. Choose the word or phrase that is closest in meaning to the italicized word(s) in each sentence.

1) The planets were associated with the gods lies in their very names, which— *other* than Earth—represent ancient dieties.

A. except

B. no more than

C. In addition to

D. as well as

2) Planets are usually *banned* from star charts in most astronomy books.

A. cancelled

B. extinguished

C. removed

D. excluded

3) You can also *distinguish* a planet from the stars by their steady light.

A. differentiate

B. differ

C. know

D. prove

4) Mercury in old Roman legends, was the *swift-footed* messenger of the gods.

A. long

B. light

C. quick

D. yellow

5) It is an almost earth-sized planet *wrapped* in white cloud.

A. surrounded

B. enveloped

C. blocked

D. hidden

6) Mars and Saturn follow *schedules* like Jupiter.

A. schemes

B. timetables

