

CONSTELLATION LEGENDS

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There are many legends concerning the constellations. From early times man has wondered about the heavens and used earthy references to explain them. The best known of these are the *Greek/Roman* myth.

Most of the legends here are of this type. There is, however, a very interesting one from the Iroquois Indians concerning Ursa Major.

I have also included directions for taking your own star pictures. The second sheet is a simplified star map of the northern hemisphere. Star Wheels can be purchased at any type store that carries educational materials. Most science orientated museums have them also. I hope that YQU find these useful in planning an educational or a social.

SCORPUS (The Scorpion)

One of the Greek legends related to this constellation is as follows: Orion, the Hunter, said to be the tallest and most beautiful of men, was boastful. He was said to have claimed dominion over every living creature. Hera sent the Scorpion to punish his arrogance. The Scorpion stung Orion thereby killing him. Nevertheless, Orion was honored in death by being placed in the heavens. The Scorpion was placed in the exact opposite side of the heavens so that the two will never meet again thereby protecting Orion from further danger.

SAGITTARUS (THE ARCHER)

The Greek myth is as follows: Chiron, an educated civilized centaur placed the centaur Sagittarius, the Archer, in the sky to help guide, Jason and his Argonauts on their voyage to Thessaly. Part of the Archer's job is to avenge the death of Orion. For this reason, the arrow of the archer is aimed toward Antares, the heart of the Scorpion.

LEO (THE LION)

The Greek myth is as follows: The Lion, originally from the moon, came to roam the earth to devour game and people. Hercules was sent to kill the lion, as his first labor of the Twelve Labors. He managed to strangle the Lion. The thick tough skin of this fierce Lion was worn by Hercules and became his trademark. After its death, the Lion returned to the heavens.

ORION (The Hunter)

The Greek legend is as follows: Apollo wanted to prevent his sister Artemis, goddess of the hunt and the moon, from falling in love with Orion. He sent a Scorpion to kill Orion. Orion leaped into the sea to escape. Apollo tricked Artemis into shooting at a dark spot in the waves which was actually Orion. Artemis tried to have the great physician Asclepius revive Orion. The physician was struck by lightning from Zeus. Artemis placed Orion and the Scorpion in the heavens as far apart as possible.

CANIS MAJOR (The Big Dog)

According to Greek legend, Canis Major is usually called the Dog of Orion. Orion loved to hunt wild animals such as Lepus, The Hare. Canis Major at Orion's heels looks as if it is about to pounce.

Another Greek myth about Canis Major is that it represents Cerebeus, the Watchdog of Hades. Canis Major is said to be guarding the lower heavens, which according to myth is the abode of the demons.

GEMINI (THE TWINS)

The Roman-Greek myth identifies the Twins as Castor, the horseman, and Pollux, the fighter. According to the story the brothers were the sons of Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, the King of Sparta. Castor, the son of Tyndarus, was mortal. Pollux the son of Zeus, was immortal. After Castor's death, Pollux was so distraught that he wanted to share his immortality with his twin. Finally, Zeus, as a reward for his brotherly love reunited them by placing them together in the heavens.

TAURUS (THE BULL)

Zeus disguised himself as a snow white bull in order to attract the attention of the beautiful Europa, the Princess of Phoenicia. She was drawn to the bull by its beauty and climbed on its back. Zeus then jumped into the sea to swim away with her to Crete. When they arrived he revealed his identity and won her love.

CYGNUS (THE SWAN)

The Greek myth associated with his constellation is: Patheon, a mortal, discovered that his father was Helios, the sun god. Patheon begged his father to let him drive the chariot of the sun across the sky. His father allowed him to do so. Patheon lost control of the chariot and was about to destroy the earth with the sun's heat. Zeus prevented his by striking Patheon. He fell from the sky into the Erindanus River. Patheon's friend, Cygnus, the son of Mars, dived into the river to find his friend's body. Apollo took pity in Cygnus and changed him into a swan.

LYRA (THE HARP)

The Harp was invented by Mercury, who gave it to his half brother Apollo, who in turn gave it to Orpheus to play on the Argonaut expedition. When Orpheus's wife died he played the Harp to charm Pluto, the god of the underworld, to win her back from Hades. He was told he could bring her back on the condition that he not look back at her until she was in the sun's light. Orpheus guided her out, but when he reached the sunlight, he looked back. Because his wife was not yet in the sunlight, she returned to Hades and was lost forever. After Orpheus died, Apollo placed him and the Harp among the stars.

CASSIOPEIA (THE QUEEN'S CHAIR)

Cassiopeia and Cephus had a beautiful daughter, Andromeda. Cassiopeia boasted that the beauty of Andromeda exceeded that of the sea nymphs. The nymphs were so upset by this that they asked Neptune, God of the sea, to punish Cassiopeia. Neptune sent Cetus, the Whale to ravage the kingdom. Cassiopeia asked Zeus for help and was told that only the sacrifice of Andromeda to Cetus would appease Neptune.

So Andromeda was chained to a rock by the sea to be devoured by Cetus. Before Cetus could strike, Perseus flew in on the winged horse, Pegasus. Perseus killed Cetus by flashing the face of Medusa at it.

When Cassiopeia objected to the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda, Perseus flashed the face of Medusa and turned Cassiopeia to stone. Neptune then took her and bound her to her chair in the heavens. The sea nymphs, in order to teach the queen humility, had Neptune place her around the pole so that at certain of the year, she would hang upside down.

URSA MAJOR (THE BIG BEAR)

The legend is an Iroquois Indian legend. The Iroquois identify the bowl of the Big Dipper as the Bear, and the three stars that make the handle as the revenants of the hunting party that was attacked by stone giants. The Bear and the three surviving Indians were placed in the sky following the attack, by a pair of invisible hands. The first Indian nearest the Bear carries a spear, the second carries a pot for cooking the Bear, and the third carries sticks to make a cooking fire. During the fall, when the bear dips low on the horizon, the Indian carrying the spear is able to strike. The blood which drips from the wounds of the Bear falls into the leaves of the forest and gives us the fall colors.

URSA MINOR (The Little Bear)

The Greek Myth says Zeus fell in love with Calisto of Arcadia, daughter of King Lycos. Together they had a son, Arcas. Zeus's jealous wife, Hera, was quite upset. To protect Calisto, Zeus changed Arcas into a Little Bear. He grabbed them both by their tails and threw them into the heavens, where they reside today. Hera was annoyed by this honor. She took revenge by telling Neptune not to allow the Bears to take their rest below the rim of the earth like other constellations. They never go below the horizon.

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY

You will need a single-lens reflex camera with a time or bulb setting, a cable release and a tripod. Any film with an ASA 200 or more will work.

1. Take a Photo of a definite object at the beginning of the roll. This will give the lab a reference for framing your pictures.
2. Pick the darkest time and location, Street lights, car lights, bright moonlight will spoil the exposure.
3. Fix the camera to the tripod.
4. Look through the viewfinder to focus and center the constellation. Set the focus on infinity.
5. Put camera on time or bulb and hold the shutter open for 30-60 seconds.
6. Keep an accurate record of the constellations photographed. This makes them easier to identify later on.
7. Try longer and shorter exposures.
8. Try pointing the camera at the North Pole and open the shutter for 50 minutes and then open for 5 minutes. Repeat throughout. You should have an interesting record of the rotation of the earth.

CONSTELLATION CHART

NORTH CIRCUMPOLAR REGION

