

The background of the cover is a deep blue space filled with stars and a spiral galaxy. A bright yellow sun is on the right, with several planets orbiting it. From left to right, the planets shown are Mercury (small grey), Venus (yellowish), Earth (blue and green), Mars (red), Jupiter (large with brown and white bands), and Saturn (with its rings). A blue vertical bar on the left side has white circles and lines, resembling a stylized planet or orbit.

The Wonder of Our

Solar System

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Our Place in the Universe

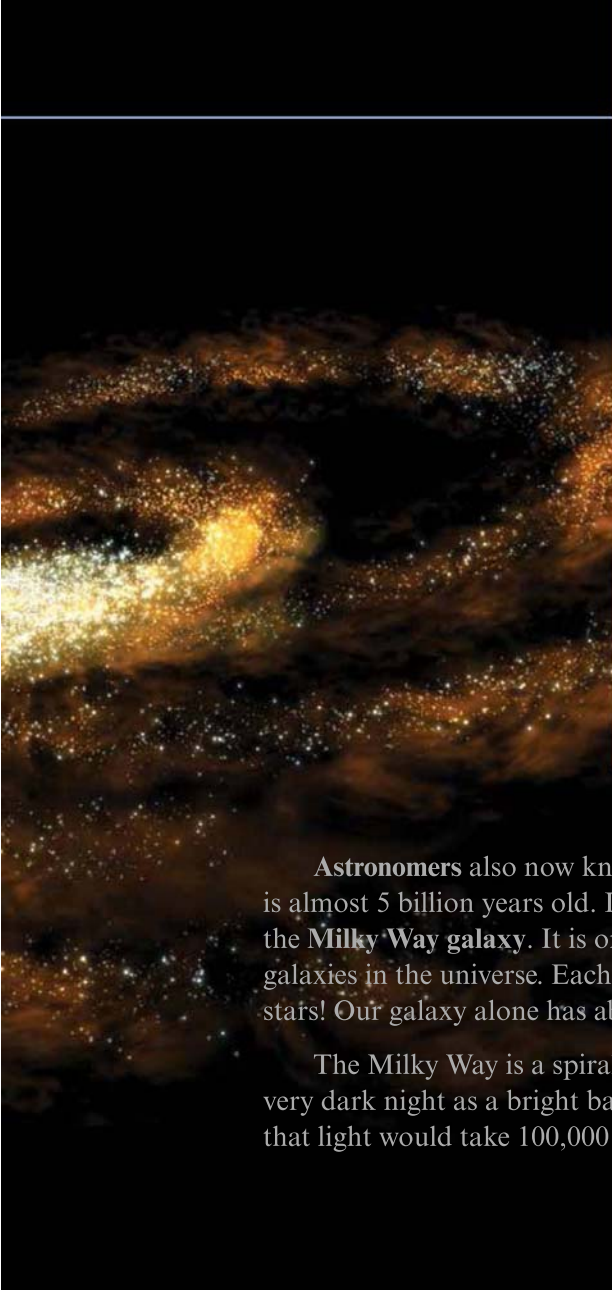
Have you ever looked into the night sky and wondered what was out there? Throughout time, people have gazed to the heavens. They are hoping to find clues about our place in the universe.

Long ago, people thought that Earth was the center of the **solar system**. They thought that the sun, moon, stars, and other planets revolved around it. Scientists finally learned that Earth is one of at least eight planets in our solar system. They found that all of the planets travel around the sun.



You Are Here

Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is a spiral galaxy. 



Space Wanderers

The word planet comes from the Greek word for wanderer. Ancient Greeks noticed that some of the lights in the night sky seemed to wander. Now we know that planets move in an invisible path around the sun. That path is called an orbit.

Astronomers also now know that our solar system is almost 5 billion years old. It is located at the edge of the **Milky Way galaxy**. It is one of at least 100 billion galaxies in the universe. Each one of them has billions of stars! Our galaxy alone has about 200 billion stars.

The Milky Way is a spiral galaxy. It can be seen on a very dark night as a bright band in the sky. It is so wide that light would take 100,000 years to travel across it.

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