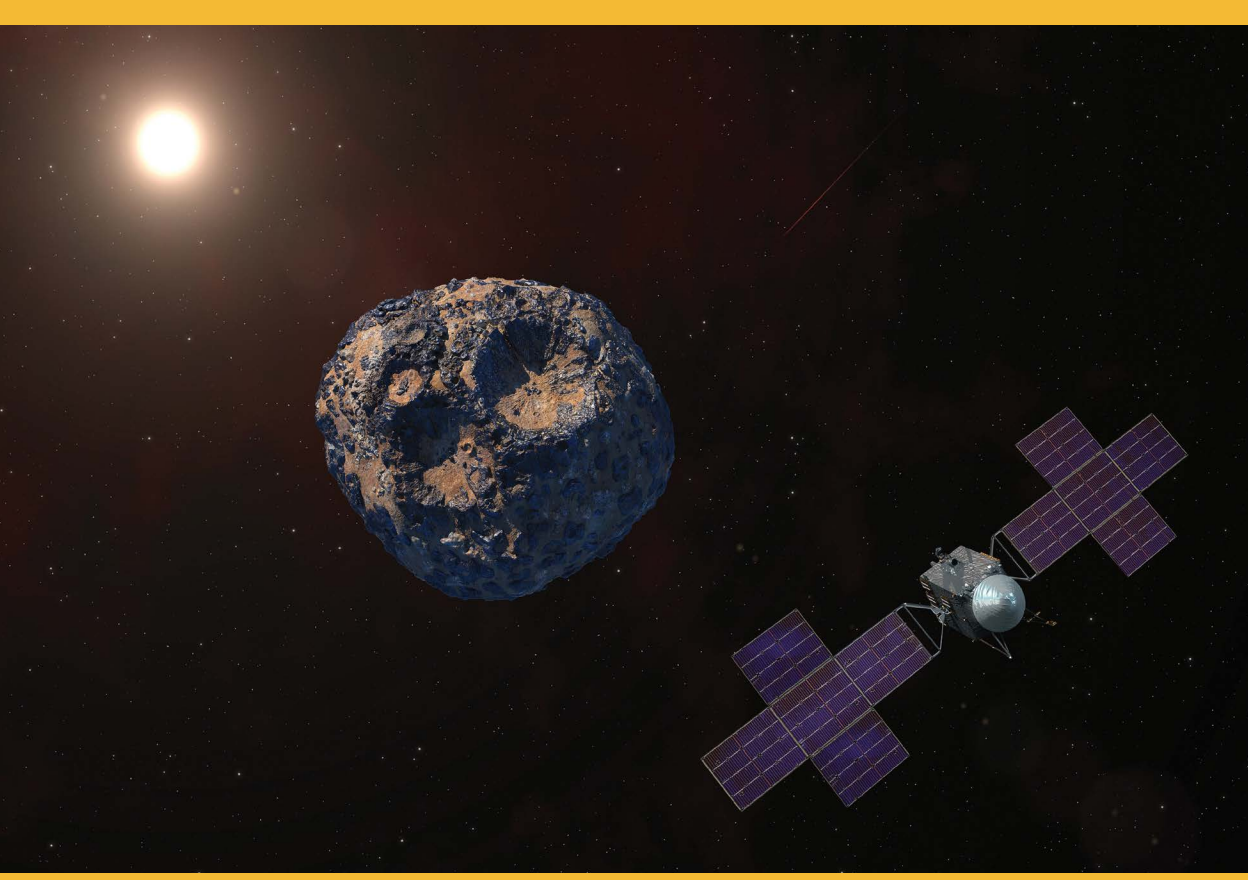




FIRST ASTEROID MINING MISSION



Allan Morey

Mitchell Lane

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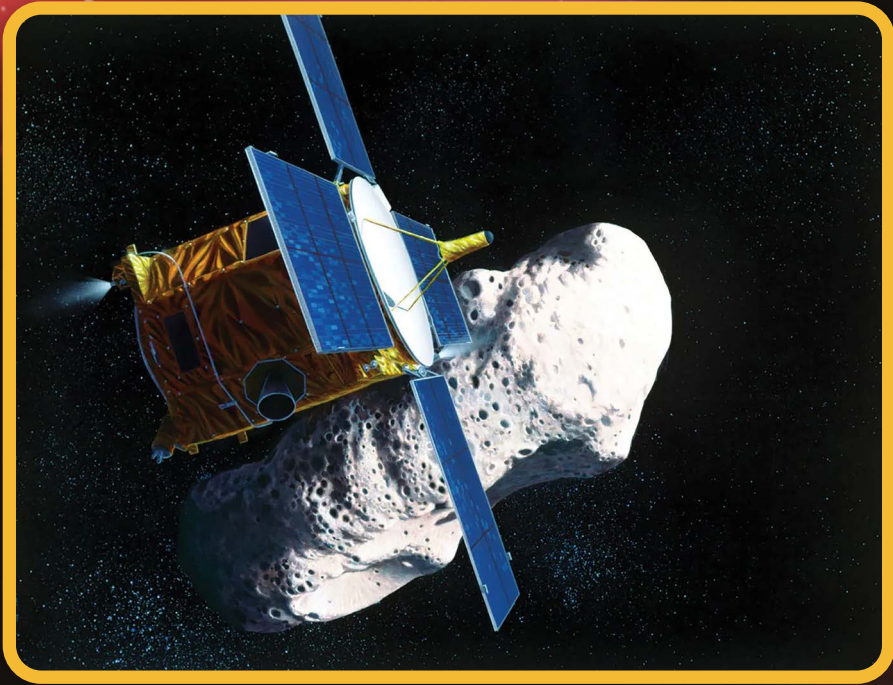
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Chapter
ONE

***NEAR
SHOEMAKER***



Artist rendition of the *NEAR* spacecraft orbiting the 433 Eros asteroid.

A *Delta* rocket rumbles as it streaks across the sky. Moments ago, it was launched from the space center at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Now, it races upwards on a first-of-a-kind mission.

The rocket's **payload** is the *Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR) Shoemaker* spacecraft. **NASA** is sending it more than 200 million miles away to 433 Eros, a potato-shaped asteroid about 20 miles long and 8 miles wide.

CHAPTER ONE

On February 14, 2000, *NEAR* begins to circle Eros, becoming the first spacecraft to **orbit** an asteroid. For the next year, the spacecraft takes photos of Eros. Scientists use those images to study the asteroid's rocky surface.

Then, on February 12, 2001, *NEAR* achieves another incredible first. It touches down on Eros. No spacecraft has landed on an asteroid before!

NEAR's scientific equipment sends data back to NASA scientists. Using this information, scientists believe Eros contains iron, aluminum, calcium, and magnesium. These are minerals and metals that are important resources back on Earth.

After two weeks, the extreme cold of outer space causes *NEAR* to stop working. But scientists now know that sending spacecraft to asteroids is possible. Next, they need to develop a way to mine the valuable resources found on these floating space rocks.

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