

# Inspiration and Astronomy



A child gazes at the diffraction of light. Credit: International Gemini Observatory/NOIRLab/NSF/AURA/ Manuel Paredes

*Wonder: a feeling of surprise mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable.*

## Lifelong Journey of Learning

A child wonders at the majesty of the night sky or the whirlpool of a faraway galaxy. What happens to that wide-eyed child whose curiosity is sparked? She asks questions and finds answers that lead to more questions. She begins a lifelong journey of learning.

Astronomy is one of our first sciences, but it still captures our imagination with its ground-breaking discoveries as no other field can. Hubble's iconic images opened the public's eyes to the majesty of the cosmos. And now, our newest telescopes may finally shed light on the age-old question, "Are we alone?"

Intellectual curiosity, inspired by wonder, is a key to academic achievement. Despite our modern information overload, new amazing astronomical images and discoveries continue to spark wonder. They inspire popular science fiction literature and films that propel us into the future, based on the real-life science of what it might be like to travel among the stars and what we might find at our destination.



Hubble Space Telescope image of the majestic spiral galaxy NGC 3147. Credit: NASA, ESA, S. Bianchi (Università degli Studi Roma Tre University), A. Laor (Technion-Israel Institute of Technology), and M. Chiaberge (ESA, STScI, and JHU)



A student at the Teen Astronomy Café where high school students were asked to test Rubin Observatory on line investigations. Credit: NOIRLab/NSF/AURA





## Astronomy:

- Sparks wonder and curiosity
- Leads to lifelong learning and STEM participation
- Attracts public attention
- Changes our view of our world
- Inspires writers and artists
- Encourages public participation in research and discoveries

A young artist adds his touch to the United States National Science Foundation's (NSF's) graphic wall at the 235th meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Honolulu, Hawaii. Credit: NSF's National Optical-Infrared Astronomy Research Laboratory/AURA/S. Jacoby

## A Science for all People

Astronomy is accessible to the public. The 2020 Christmas conjunction in the night sky of Saturn and Jupiter was an event many saw at home and was featured in news stories around the globe. The great American solar eclipse of 2017 attracted millions of eager viewers from across the US.

Astronomy research is open to us all. Citizen science projects and amateur observers have made significant contributions including identifying new planets outside of our solar system and finding previously unknown asteroids.

Astronomy is the people's science; the incredible dark sky is our birthright and a valuable resource. The study of astronomy will continue to inspire us to wonder and bring us the marvels of the Universe.

## A Universe of Possibilities

Astronomy opens doorways to different thinking. Who knows what curious minds, once engaged, will discover? Once she starts wondering, the possibilities are limitless.



Group watching the 2017 Great American Solar eclipse. By Oregon State University - IMG\_9668, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=61841319>



2020 Christmas conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn Credit: international Gemini Observatory/NOIRLab/NSF/AURA



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