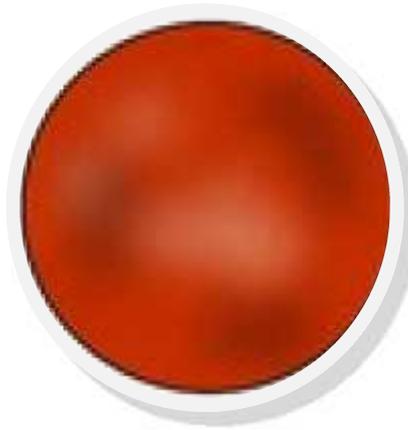




Name _____

Date _____



Mars, the fourth planet from the Sun, is half the size of Earth. Much of the planet is desert. Parts of this planet's surface are covered with sand dunes and dry reddish brown deserts. Mars also has huge mountains and deep canyons. It also has a gigantic volcano, which rises 26 kilometers into the Martian sky. This is three times higher than Mount Everest. Still other areas look like dried riverbeds. Some scientists believe water may once have flowed on Mars. Mars also has two polar caps made up of frozen water and dry ice.

Why does much of Mars look red?

The soil of Mars is full of metals that have rusted. This makes it look red. That's why Mars is sometimes known as the Red Planet. That's why there are red sand dunes. Strong winds blow up big storms of the red dust. This makes the sky look pink. Pink, blue and white clouds move through the Red Planet's sky.

The atmosphere on Mars is thinner than on Earth. It is mostly carbon dioxide. It is not air we could breathe. During the day on Mars, temperatures can be a comfortable 22 Celsius. However, at night, the temperatures drop as low as -168 Celsius.

For a long time, some people thought there might be life on Mars. When two U.S. spacecraft landed on the planet in 1976, they sent back photographs of Mars and did experiments to find out if life exists there. Scientists now believe that Mars does not have plant or animal life like Earth.

Mars is 228 million kilometers from the sun. It has two potato-shaped moons. Phobos is the larger and faster one. It zips around Mars in only 7 1/2 hours. Daimos, the smaller, takes 30 hours to circle Mars. A year on Mars is 687 days long. One day is about the same as an Earth day. It's diameter is 6800 kilometers.

1. Mars is the _____ planet from the sun.
2. Mars is covered with _____ and dry reddish brown deserts.
3. There is a gigantic _____ and deep canyons.
4. The soil is full of _____ that have rusted.
5. Two U.S. spacecraft landed on Mars in _____.