

The Milky Way

- ★ **On clear, dark nights**, the Milky Way can be seen as a pale glowing band that stretches right across the sky.
- ★ **The Romans were the first** to use the phrase Milky Way (Via Lactea). The ancient Greek astronomers called it the Milky Circle (Kiklos Galaxias).



A small telescope will reveal some of the countless millions of stars that make up the Milky Way.

- ★ **According to Greek myth**, the goddess Hera produced the milk in the Milky Circle to feed the infant hero Hercules.
- ★ **Some Native American peoples** regarded the Milky Way as the route taken by ghosts on their way to the land of the hereafter.
- ★ **The Inuit peoples of Alaska** and northern Canada saw the Milky Way as a pathway of glowing ashes that led weary travellers home.
- ★ **For Aborigines**, the patches of darkness in the Milky Way made a picture of a giant emu stretching across the heavens.
- ★ **Seventh-century Korean astronomers** marked the position of stars with black dots on white paper and they showed the Milky Way as a thick black band.
- ★ **Galileo was the first astronomer** to observe the Milky Way through a telescope and discover its true nature as 'congeries of innumerable stars'.
- ★ **The German philosopher Emmanuel Kant** (1724–1804) was the first to speculate that if the Milky Way was a galaxy of stars, then there might be other, more distant, 'Milky Ways' visible in the night sky.
- ★ **The astronomer William Herschel** was the first to draw a map of what the Milky Way might look like if viewed from the outside. His disc-shaped image became known as the 'grindstone' model.
- ★ **By studying** the distribution of globular clusters in the Milky Way, the American astronomer Harlow Shapely (1885–1972) was able to deduce that the Sun was located near the edge of the Milky Way.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Read the text, then answer the questions.

- 1.** What did the ancient Greek astronomers call the Milky Way? Why is one name in brackets?

- 2.** What is the Milky Way? Who first discovered this and how?

- 3.** How has the author broken up the text? Why do you think he has done it in this way?

- 4.** What did Emmanuel Kant suggest?

- 5.** Why has the writer chosen to put some print in **bold**?

- 6.** How did Harlow Shapely work out where the Sun is in relation to the Milky Way?

- 7.** What order has the author followed in the text, and why?

- 8.** Describe another way of organising the points in this text.
