The universe describes space and all of the planets, stars, galaxies, and other matter contained there. It is so big that some scientists believe that it might go on forever.

Key vocabulary

universe
All the things that exist in space.

galaxy
A very large group of stars and planets.

solar system
The sun and the bodies that move in orbit around it. In our solar system there are eight planets, many moons, and also asteroids and comets.

sun
Any star that is the center of a system of planets.

star
A ball of burning gases in space that gives off light. Oftentimes, a star is seen from the Earth as a tiny point of light in the night sky.

planet
A large body that does not give off light. A planet must meet three criteria: It must orbit the sun; it must have enough mass for its own gravity to shape it into a sphere; and it must be massive enough to clear other large objects from its orbit.

Milky Way
The galaxy that includes the earth and our solar system. The Milky Way is made up of more than 100 billion stars and can be seen as a hazy white streak across the night sky.
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