

Gemini: The Twins



On a dark night, turn your eyes up to the sky. The **constellation** Gemini is a sight to see. It has two very bright stars called the Twins. People have known about them for thousands of years. They have been in the sky
5 as long as anyone can remember.

What Are Constellations?

Constellations are fascinating and helpful to many people. They are **patterns** of stars that people see in the sky. These star patterns were invented by people fascinated with the stars. **Ancient poets** of different
10 cultures made up stories about them. Sailors used the stars to navigate across the oceans. Farmers used the stars to tell them when to plant and when to harvest because the same patterns appear in the sky during the same season every year. How long have we been seeing
15 patterns in the night sky? We have done it for at least 6,000 years.

constellation

a group of stars that form a shape

pattern

a picture, image, or design made by repeated items

ancient

very old

poet

a person who writes stories in lines with emotion and rhythm

Why Did the Idea of Constellations Begin?

Constellations are groups of stars with a purpose. Why were star groups made up? There are so many stars! How could we remember them all? We could put
 20 them in groups. The groups break the sky into parts. The stars in the sky are divided into 88 constellations. They help us remember which stars are which. How many stars can we see? On a dark night, we see 1,000 to 1,500 stars. Where can we see the Twins? We can
 25 see them in the northern hemisphere in November through April. We can see them in the southern hemisphere in December through March.

The Ancient Stories of Gemini

Ancient people invented stories about the Gemini Twins. The Egyptians called them twin plants. The
 30 Hindus called them twin gods. Arabs called them twin peacocks. What is the ancient Greek story of Gemini? The Greeks said they were the sons of the Greek god Zeus and the woman Leda. They said that Zeus and Leda had twin sons. Their names were Castor and
 35 Pollux. They were **devoted** and loving brothers. They looked alike. But they were not alike. Castor was **mortal** like his mother. He became a horseman. Pollux was immortal like his father. He became a boxer. Both became **expert** soldiers. Castor was killed in battle.
 40 Pollux could not bear to be without his twin. Pollux asked his father, Zeus, for help. He asked for Castor to come back to life. Zeus let them be together side by side forever. They are the Twins that shine brightly in the sky. They are the two **brilliant** stars in Gemini.

devoted

loyal; deeply caring

mortal

subject to death;
will not live forever

expert

skilled or
knowledgeable

brilliant

very bright; giving
off lots of light

Look Up

- 45 When you look up on a dark night, the sky is flooded with star patterns that tell a story.
- Ursa Major (The Great Bear) is identified by the square of the Big Dipper, which forms the bear's body, and a chain of stars, which forms its tail. Ursa Major can be seen in the northern sky throughout the year.
 - 50 ■ Ursa Minor (Lesser Bear) is identified by the square of the Little Dipper, which forms the bear's body, and a chain of stars, which forms its tail. Ursa Minor can be seen in the northern sky. The North Star is part of this constellation. This bright star has been helpful to nighttime travelers for centuries.
 - 55 ■ Orion (The Hunter) has some of the brightest stars. He is positioned in the sky to fight off a raging bull. Orion stands with his right arm holding a great club uplifted in the air, ready to strike. Over his left arm hangs a lion's skin that he holds up as a shield in front of him to stop the raging bull. Taurus the Mighty Bull is a constellation that is charging right for Orion. Orion is visible throughout the world. We can see this constellation between December and April.
 - 60 ■ Leo (The Lion) is one of the easiest constellations to find. An easy way to spot Leo is to look for a backward question mark in the sky, which represents the head and front of the body. In the northern hemisphere, Leo can be located in spring, and in the southern hemisphere it can be located in autumn.
 - 65 ■ Centaurus (The Centaur) has the greatest number of visible stars in it. It has 101 stars.
 - 70 ■ Hydra (The Water Snake) is the largest constellation. It covers more than 3% of the sky.
 - 75 ■



*Constellations shown above
TOP: Ursa Major, MIDDLE: Orion,
BOTTOM: Leo*