Pictures in the Sky
by D.D. Maros

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Vocabulary

dim
gases
gigantic
ladle
patterns
shine
temperature

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by D.D. Maros
Look up.
The night sky is gigantic. It seems to go on forever. Millions of stars shine and twinkle. Have you ever connected the stars to make a star picture?
The Big Dipper

The Big Dipper is the star shape that is easiest to find in the night sky. It is made up of seven stars that shine brightly. These seven stars form the shape of a ladle or a big spoon. That’s how the Big Dipper got its name!

Pictures in the Sky

Long ago, people looked up in the night sky and saw patterns in the stars. The patterns seemed to make shapes. Ancient people gave these shapes names. Some shapes were named after animals. Some were named after people. These names are still used today.
The Big Dipper in Spring and Summer

The group of stars that make up this shape looks different from season to season. In the spring, the Big Dipper looks high in the sky. The ladle is upside-down. It could be pouring water on Earth. In the summer, the dipper looks as if it is scooping up stars!

The Big Dipper in Fall and Winter

It is easy to see the Big Dipper in the fall. The starry ladle is right-side up. In the winter, the dipper’s handle points down toward Earth. It looks like it’s standing up on its handle.

No matter what time of year it is, you can always find the Big Dipper.
Polaris, the North Star

The two outer stars in the bowl of the Big Dipper are called “pointers.” They both point to the North Star. The North Star is also called Polaris.

For hundreds of years, Polaris has helped travelers know which way is north.

Polaris is like all stars. It is made up of different types of gases that burn at a very high temperature. It’s the glow of the burning gases that shine in the night sky.
The Little Dipper

The Little Dipper is harder to find than the Big Dipper. But if you can find Polaris, you should be able to find the Little Dipper. Polaris is the brightest star in the Little Dipper. It is at the end of the Little Dipper’s handle. The other stars in the dipper are dim. That is why the Little Dipper can be hard to find.

Can you guess why this group of stars is called the Little Dipper? It has the same shape as the Big Dipper, but it is much smaller. Can you see how the Little Dipper is pouring into the Big Dipper?
Reader Response

1. Look at pages 6 and 7. How did the illustrations help you better understand how the Big Dipper changes throughout the year?

2. The author has organized this book by comparing the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper. Use a diagram, like the one below, to show how these two star pictures are alike and different. How did this organization help you as you read?

3. Stars *shine* at night. Write two sentences about other objects that *shine* in the night sky.

4. Come up with your own star pattern. Draw stars and connect them to form a shape. Give your shape a name.

Now you can find the Big Dipper and Polaris. You can also find the Little Dipper. You are ready to begin searching the skies for all sorts of other shapes. Happy hunting!