

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Uranus

by Cynthia Sherwood

Uranus is a giant icy ball of gas and liquid, with a solid center. It's the seventh planet from the sun and the farthest that you can see without a telescope. Although Neptune is even farther from the sun, Uranus is the coldest planet in our solar system. The temperature of its atmosphere is minus 350 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 212 Centigrade).



Photo of Uranus : NASA/Space Telescope Science Institute

When viewed from space, Uranus is a pretty pale blue color. The color comes from clouds on its surface made up of tiny crystals of methane gas. Uranus also has rings like Saturn, though they aren't very noticeable. The rings are made of ice and rock.

## *Did you know...*

Uranus is a very windy planet. On the surface, hurricane-like winds are blowing at speeds of around 200 miles per hour (322 kilometers per hour).

Uranus is so big that 50 Earths could fit inside of it.

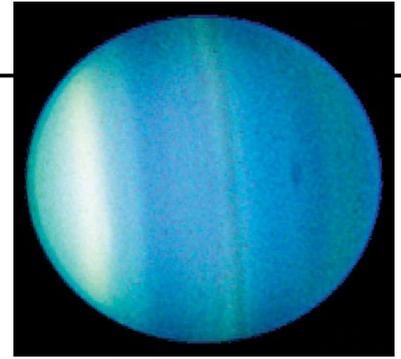
At least 21 moons orbit around Uranus, somewhat like a Ferris wheel. But the most unique part about Uranus is that it's tilted. On Earth, we have the North Pole and the South Pole. But everything is topsy-turvy in Uranus. Its poles are on its sides and it orbits the sun on its side. The strange way that it spins can mean nights on some parts of Uranus last more than forty years! Scientists think a planet as big as Earth may have crashed into Uranus at some point, tipping it onto its side.

There's another fun fact about Uranus—it's the only planet named after a Greek god instead of a Roman god. Uranus was the Greek god of the sky and the husband of Earth.

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1. What are Uranus' rings made of?

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2. According to scientists, why might Uranus be spinning on its side?

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3. Which statement about Uranus is true?

- a. Uranus has clouds.
- b. Uranus is a very windy planet.
- c. Uranus is the coldest planet.
- d. All of these facts are true.

4. What gives Uranus its blue color?

- a. water on the surface of the planet
- b. clouds made of tiny crystals
- c. bluish rocks and dust on the surface
- d. the reflection of the sun

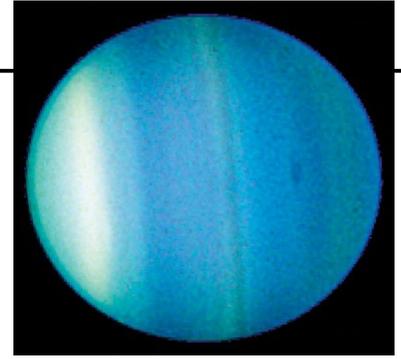
5. What part of Uranus is made of solid material?

- a. the atmosphere
- b. the poles
- c. the center
- d. All of Uranus is solid.

## ANSWER KEY

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1. What are Uranus' rings made of?

**ice and rock**

2. According to scientists, why might Uranus be spinning on its side?

**A planet the size of Earth may have crashed into it.**

3. Which statement about Uranus is true? **d**

- a. Uranus has clouds.
- b. Uranus is a very windy planet.
- c. Uranus is the coldest planet.
- d. **All of these facts are true.**

4. What gives Uranus its blue color? **b**

- a. water on the surface of the planet
- b. **clouds made of tiny crystals**
- c. bluish rocks and dust on the surface
- d. the reflection of the sun

5. What part of Uranus is made of solid material? **c**

- a. the atmosphere
- b. the poles
- c. **the center**
- d. All of Uranus is solid.