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Activities

When the Sun Goes Dark

Name: _____ Date: _____

In ancient times, the sight of the Sun suddenly going dark in the daytime could be terrifying. It was often considered a bad omen or sign of angry gods. In this Planet Diary activity, you'll learn what's really going in a solar eclipse.

Directions

- Start with a look at this solar eclipse animation. Watch the eclipse, then read the caption. Answer Workspace question 1.
- Visit the Exploratorium to learn Why eclipses happen. Then, answer questions 2 and 3.
- Go to Other Solar Eclipses. Then, answer question 4.
- Go to About Eclipses, click on "Why Don't We Have an Eclipse Every Month?" and watch the video. Then, answer question 5.
- When is the next total solar eclipse? Go to World Map of Future Eclipses. Use the map to answer the last question.
- Read the description of the Zambia eclipse in 2001.
- Enjoy this look at the total solar eclipse in China in 2008. Read the description, then click *View eclipse path*. Continue to *Totality Highlights* on the right.

Workspace

1. Describe the relative positions of the Sun, Earth, and Moon during a solar eclipse.

2. Why do the Sun and Moon appear about the same size during an eclipse despite their actual size difference?

3. What's the difference between the *umbra* and *penumbra* of a solar eclipse?

4. What's the difference between a *partial* and an *annular* eclipse?

5. The Moon passes between the Sun and Earth every month. Why isn't there a solar eclipse every month?

6. When is the next total eclipse in the United States? Describe its path across the nation.

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