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Opening extract from

See Inside Planet Earth

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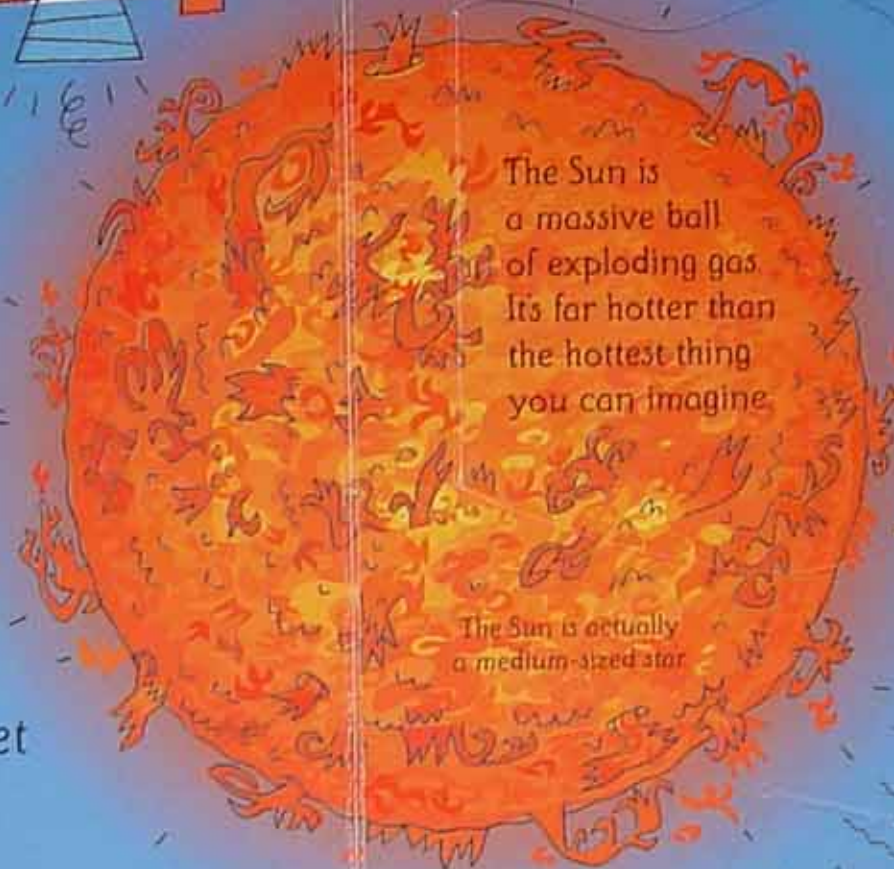
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The Sun is a massive ball of exploding gas. It's far hotter than the hottest thing you can imagine.

The Sun is actually a medium-sized star.

Earth in space

Our Earth is one of eight planets that circle the Sun. Together they are known as the solar system. Life on Earth couldn't exist without the Sun's heat and light.

Many stars are millions of light years away.

The solar system is just a tiny part of a huge universe.

It takes the Earth 365 days to travel around the Sun.

Mercury

Mercury and Venus, the planets nearest the Sun, are VERY hot.



Venus

Earth's moon

Earth

Many planets have moons spinning around them.

The hottest stars are blue, the coldest ones are red, but they are all INCREDIBLY hot.

Distances in space are so vast, they are measured in light years. A light year is the distance light travels in a year – 95 trillion km or 6 trillion miles.

There is evidence of water on Mars, which may mean there's life there too.

Mars



Asteroids are large lumps of rock or metal that whizz around the Sun.

Expert: Dr Julia Jones
Lecturer in Conservation Biology at the School of the Environment and Natural Resources,
University of Wales, Bangor

A blanket of gases

We can live on Earth because it's surrounded by a blanket of gases, known as the atmosphere.

The Sun gives off an enormous amount of energy, including heat and light.

Energy from the Sun

More energy from the Sun

Further away from Earth the atmosphere gets thinner until it fades away

An ultra-violet (UV) ray

A layer of gas, known as the ozone layer, absorbs harmful UV rays from the Sun.

The ozone layer

The atmosphere gives us air to breathe and water to drink.

Shooting stars are actually rocks falling from space

A worried bird

Heat from the Sun generates winds, ocean currents and all of our weather

Under the hot Sun, water evaporates. It rises into the sky and turns into clouds of tiny water droplets.

A shooting star

Other planets have atmospheres too, but it would be almost impossible to live on them.

This satellite circles around the Earth collecting information about the weather.

The International Space Station is a floating home for astronauts.

A space shuttle takes astronauts to the space station.

The atmosphere contains gases, known as greenhouse gases, that help keep the Earth warm.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane and water vapour are the main greenhouse gases.

Without any greenhouse gases...

The Earth's atmosphere is finely balanced. Any changes to this balance will make it harder to live on Earth.