

LEVELED BOOK • 0

Pluto's New Friends



Written by Carol Shank
Illustrated by Nora Voutas

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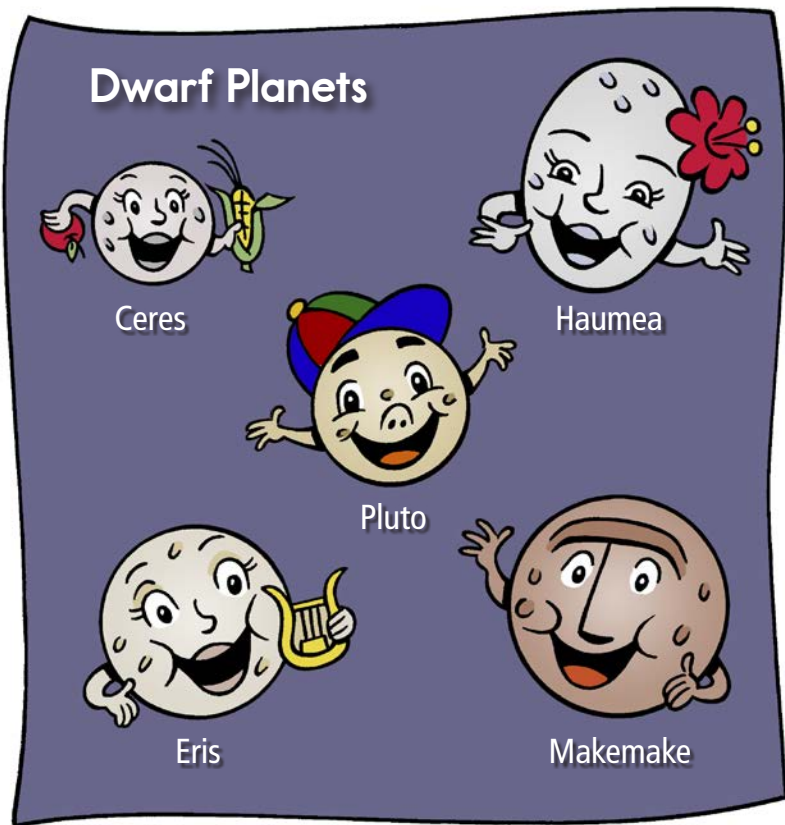
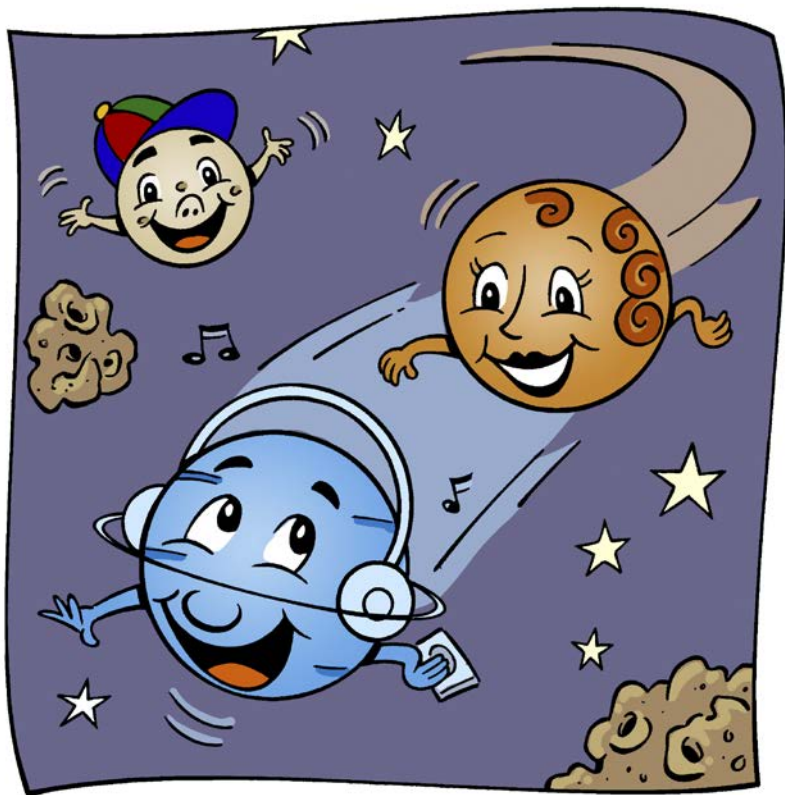


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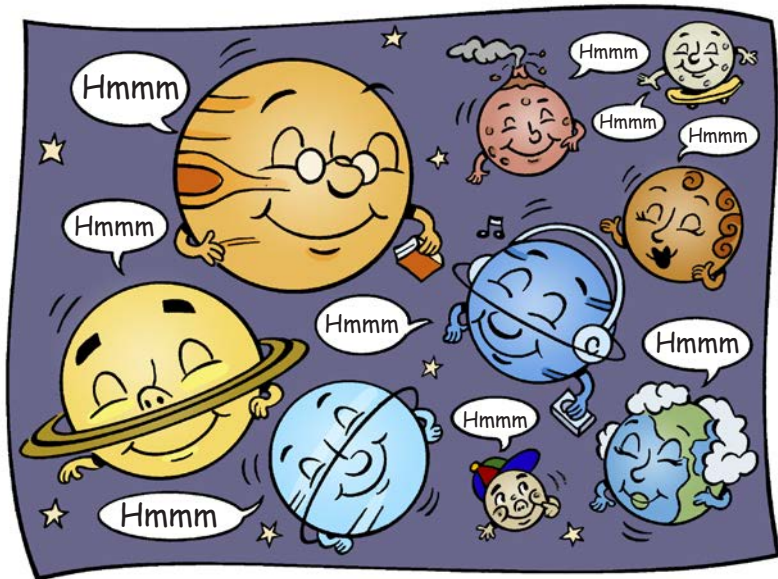
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Brag and Tag

Pluto loved to play the Brag and Tag game with the other planets. He wanted to brag about being the smallest planet. He hoped someone would call on him to brag soon.

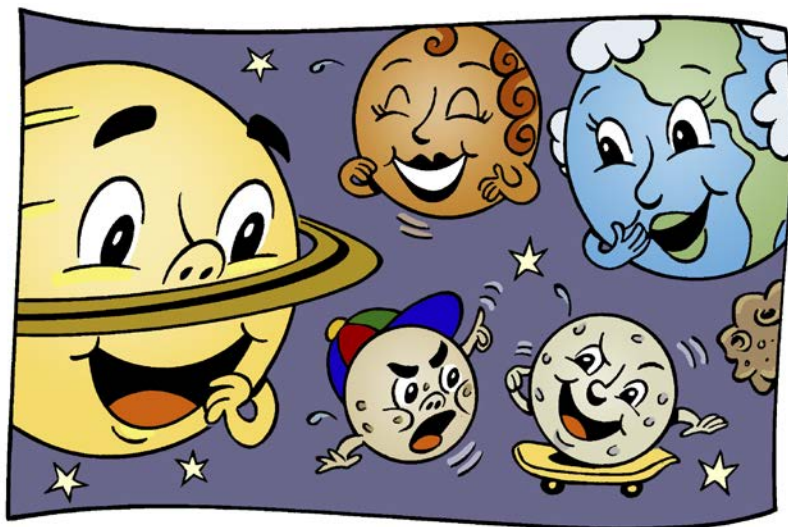
“I am Venus, the second planet from the Sun,” Venus said. “Tag, Neptune!”



“I am Neptune, an ice giant. I have stormy weather.” Then Neptune yawned. “Game over!” he said, and he began to hum.

Pluto was sad that no one had tagged him. But he joined in the humming. It sounded lovely, like bells ringing.

Soon everyone but Pluto was asleep. Pluto watched over the others from his distant orbit. Surely he’d be tagged tomorrow. “Good night, planets,” he whispered.



Bullies

The next day, Pluto could hardly wait to play the game.

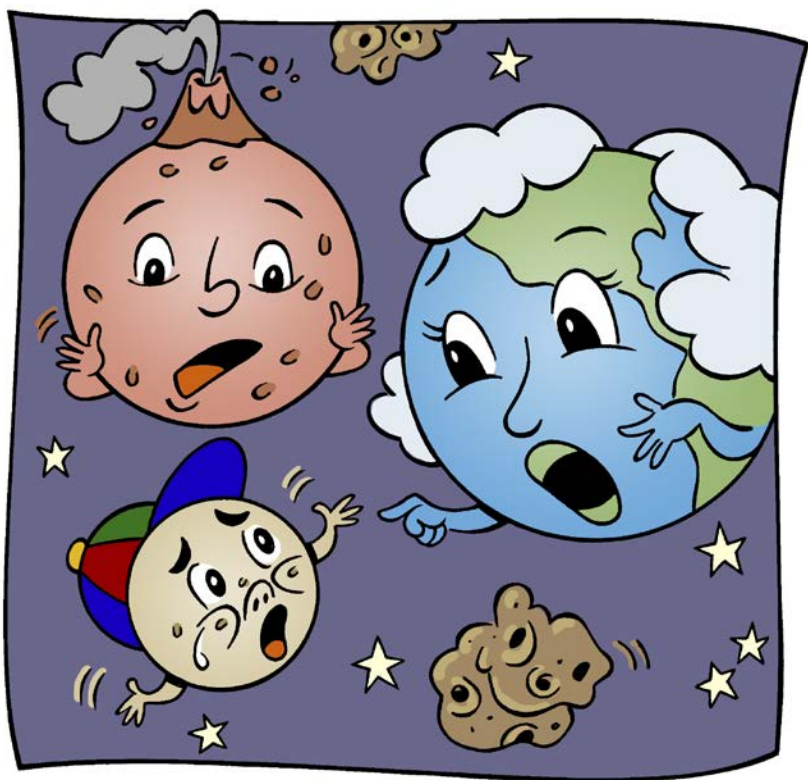
"I am Mercury, and I orbit the Sun in eighty-eight days," Mercury began.

"I am the smallest planet."

"Huh?" said Pluto. Then he shouted,

"*I'm* the smallest planet!"

"You *were* the smallest planet," said Mercury. "I'm the smallest now, and I'm a giant compared to you!" He laughed, and the others joined in.



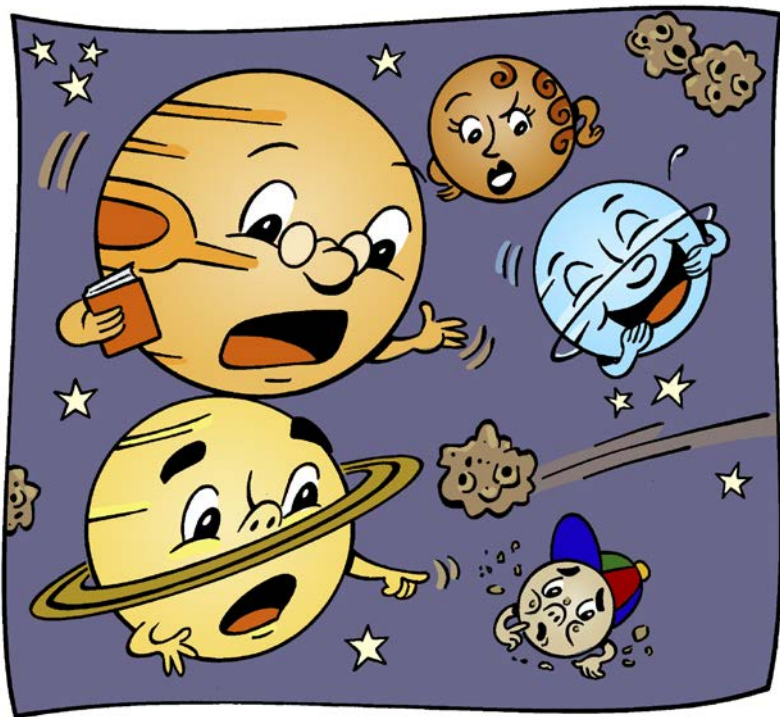
"We voted, and you're no longer a planet," said Earth.

"Since when?"

"Since the other day," Mars answered.

"You are too tiny to be a planet, and you have a messy orbit as well."

"B-b-but," Pluto said. "I orbit the Sun, just like the rest of you!"



"Your orbit is full of junk," Saturn said.

"Look at all the rocks and ice chunks!"

"Tsk, tsk! Very messy, indeed!" added Venus.

"You could even be an asteroid," laughed Uranus.

Then Jupiter spoke up. "Tough luck, kid. But don't worry. It's a big universe. Go find something else to do."

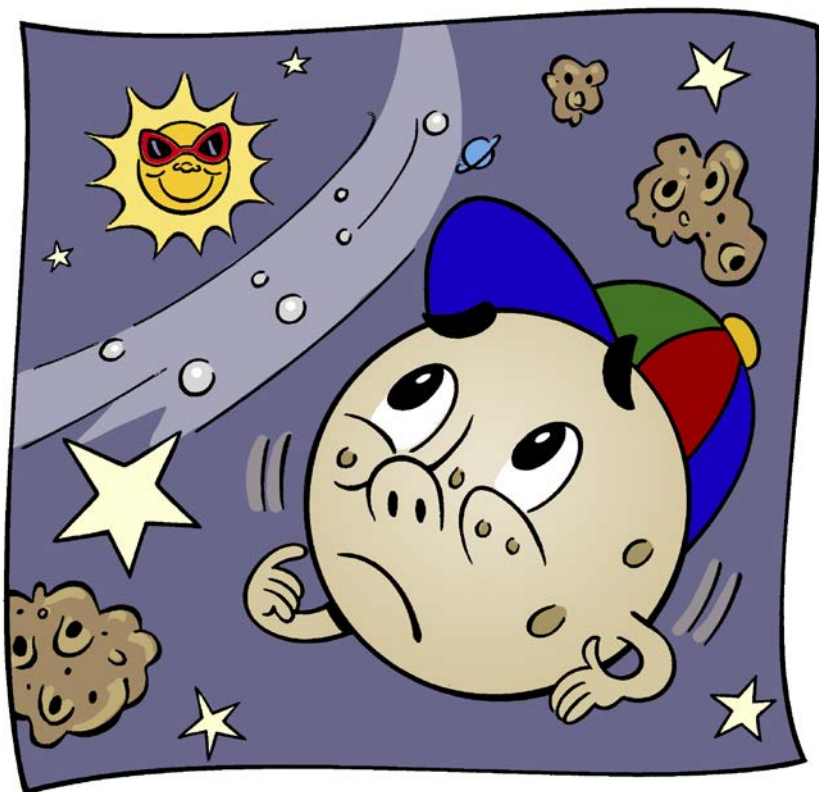


Dark Days

Pluto felt as if he'd been struck by a comet. He was sad and silent for days and days.

Charon, his largest moon, tried to cheer him up. "You're still special, Pluto. Some planets have no moons, and you have three."

Pluto sighed. "But I'm not a planet. I could have a million moons, and it wouldn't matter. I'm a nobody."



For hours, Pluto stared at the Sun. Maybe the Sun could put in a good word for him with the planets. The Sun knew how hard-working he was. After all, it took him 248 years to complete his orbit!

Sadly, Pluto realized he couldn't ask for help. The Sun was much too far away to hear him.



Pluto looked away from the Sun,
beyond the planets. He spent days
looking at stars, comets, and asteroids.
Then one day, he looked up and saw
someone like him, only bigger.

Dwarf Planets

"Hello, Pluto," said Eris.

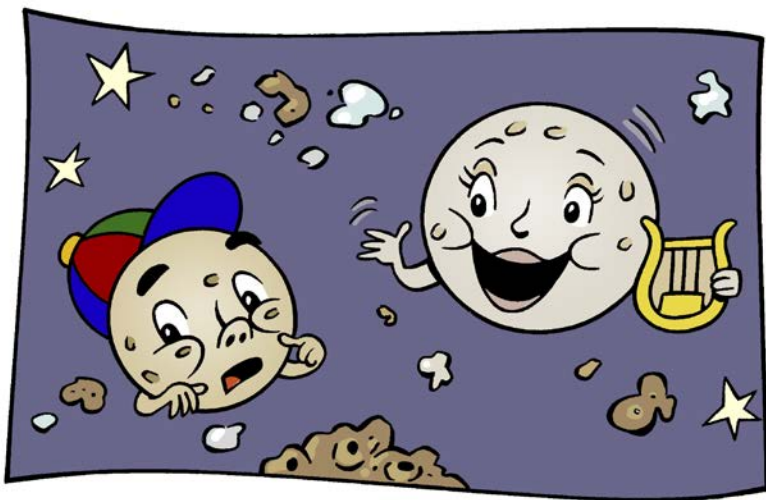
"Are you a new planet?" Pluto asked.

"No, I am Eris. I'm a dwarf planet, and so are you. We're just like planets, only we share our orbits with other objects."

Pluto made a face. "You mean the junk?"

Eris laughed. "It's just frozen gases and rocks left over from when the solar system began."





“There sure is a lot of it,” Pluto griped.

“Especially in the Kuiper Belt,” said Eris.

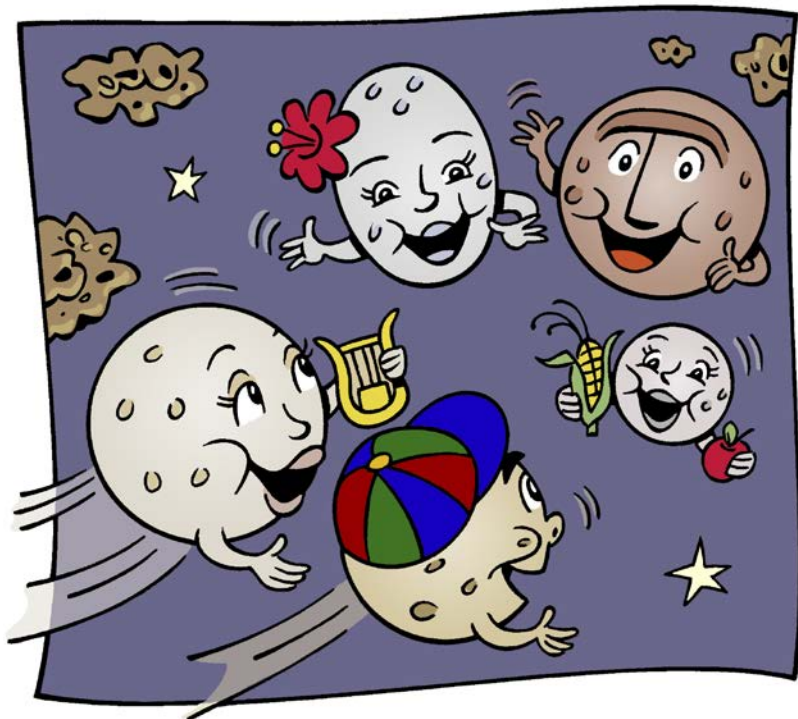
“That’s our neighborhood. Scientists study the Kuiper Belt for clues about how the solar system began.”

“Are they studying us, too?” Pluto asked.

“Yes! They’ve named five dwarf planets, and they think there are many, many more of us.”

“Let’s go find them!” Pluto cried.

“Hold on, Pluto. You should meet my three friends first!”



New Friends

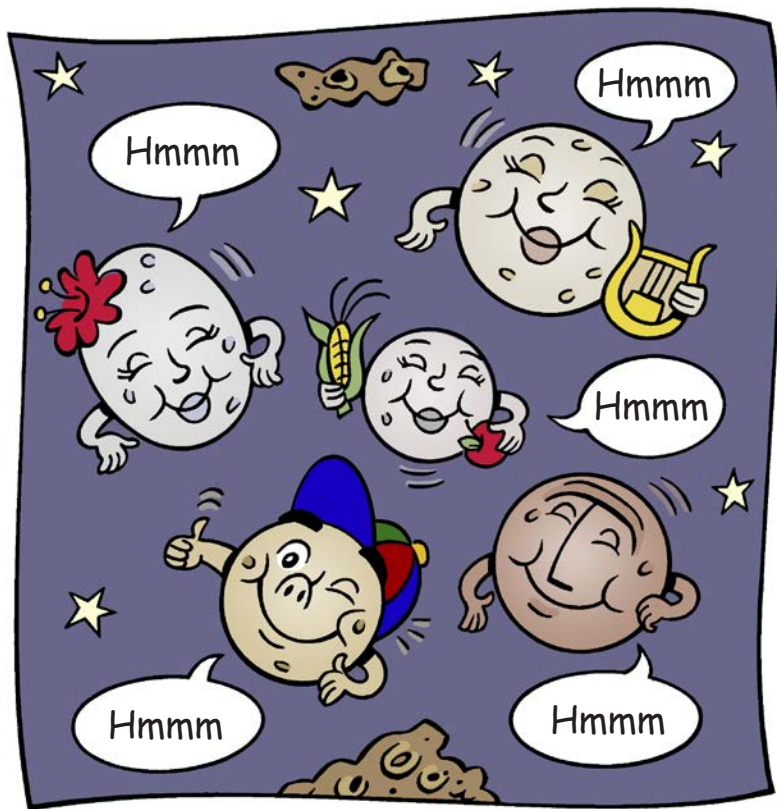
Eris and Pluto rolled out of their orbits. They zoomed over to where Makemake, Haumea, and Ceres had gathered together to meet them. In their excitement, they all started talking at once.

“I have an idea,” said Pluto. “Let’s get to know each other with a game.”



They played Brag and Tag for hours and hours. Pluto was “tagged” a dozen times or more. Meanwhile, he learned that Eris took the longest time to orbit the Sun, and Ceres took the shortest. He learned that their names all came from ancient myths.

Ceres was named for the Roman goddess of the harvest. Haumea was named for a Hawaiian goddess, Eris for a Greek goddess, and Makemake for an Easter Island god.



"I am named for the Roman god of the underworld," said Pluto. "I am proud to be a dwarf planet with new friends. Game over! Hey, do dwarf planets like to hum?"

"We do!" said Makemake.

A new harmony of voices rang out.
It was simply lovely to hear.

Pronunciation guide:

Ceres (SERE-eez)

Charon (KARE-en)

Eris (AIR-iss)

Haumea (how-MAY-uh)

Kuiper (KY-per)

Makemake (MAW-kay MAW-kay)

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Level O Leveled Book
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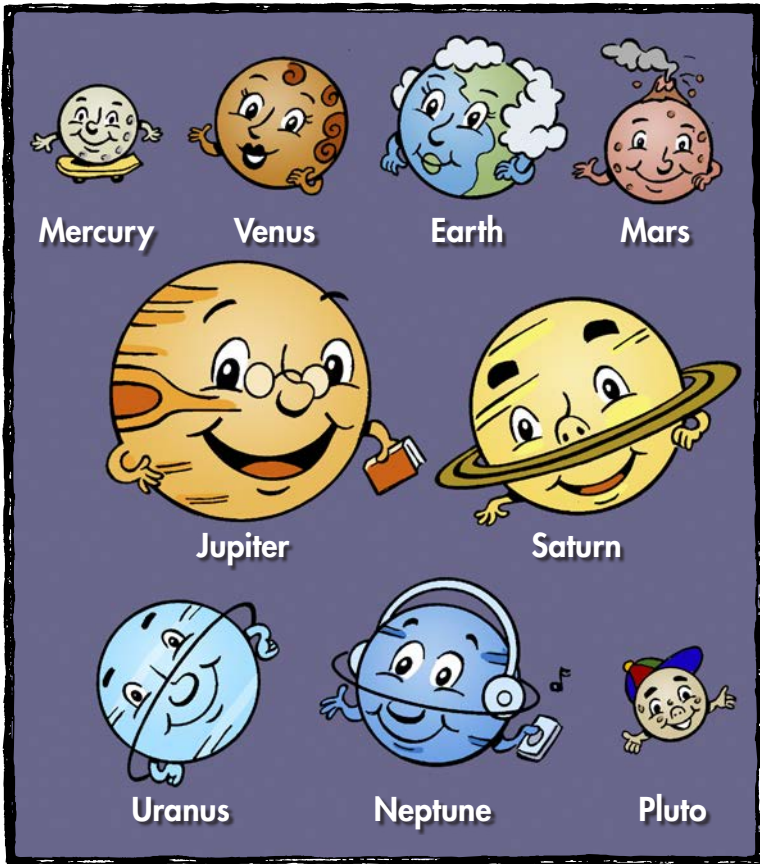
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