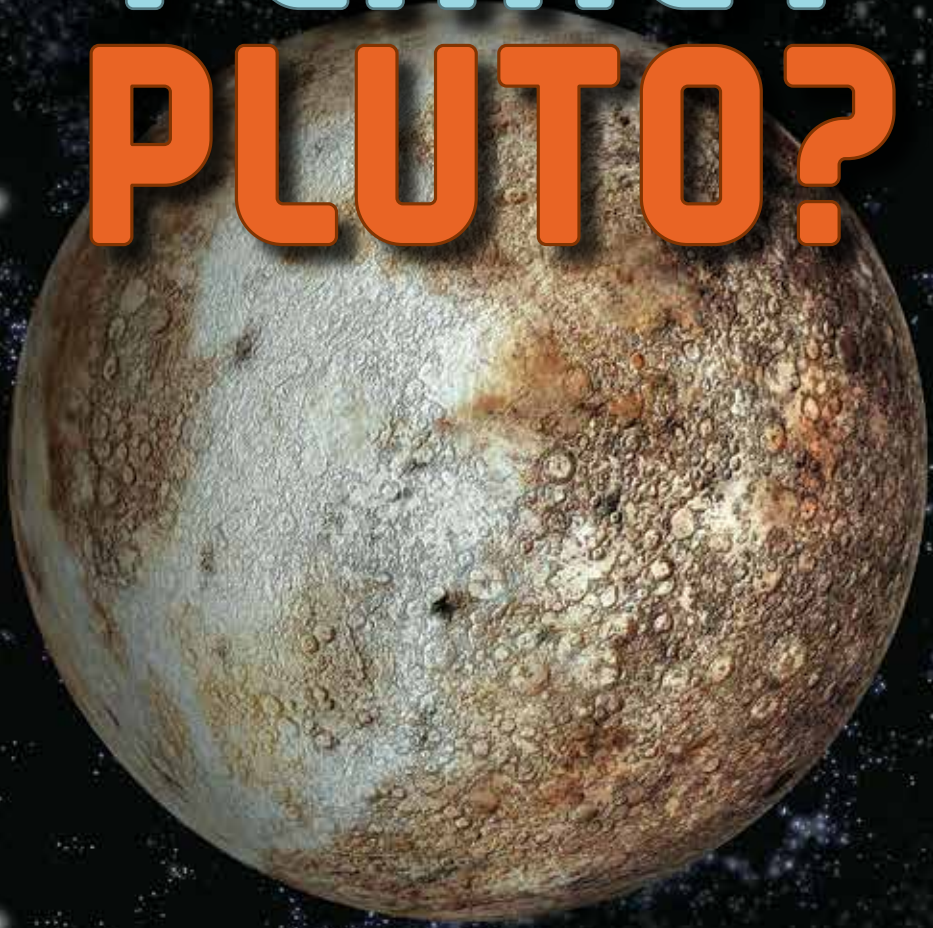


# WHAT HAPPENED TO PLANET PLUTO?



by Tracie Heskett

# WHAT HAPPENED TO PLANET PLUTO?

by Tracie Heskett

For years, students learned the names of the nine planets in our solar system. That's right, nine. The icy object called Pluto was once thought to be the ninth planet. But today, Pluto is no longer considered a planet. What happened?

In 1930, Pluto was discovered **orbiting**, or going around, the sun beyond Neptune. Scientists didn't really have a definition of a planet. Instead, they knew what wasn't a planet. For example, **asteroids** weren't called planets.

## Amplify Atlas™

Amplify Education, Inc.  
55 Washington Street  
Suite 800  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
www.amplify.com

© 2014 Amplify Education, Inc. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any other language in any form or by any means without the written permission of Amplify Education, Inc.

## What Happened to Planet Pluto?

Level O

Author: Tracie Heskett

## Credits

Cover: Denis Scott/Corbis/Image Library; p. 1: Mark Garlick/Science Photo Library/Getty Images; p. 2: NASA/JPL; p. 3: M. Brown/CIT/NASA/ESA/STScI/Science Photo Library; p. 4: Detlev Van Ravenswaay/Science Photo Library/Getty Images

ISBN: 978-1-941554-47-0

Printed in the United States of America

Pluto and its moon, Charon

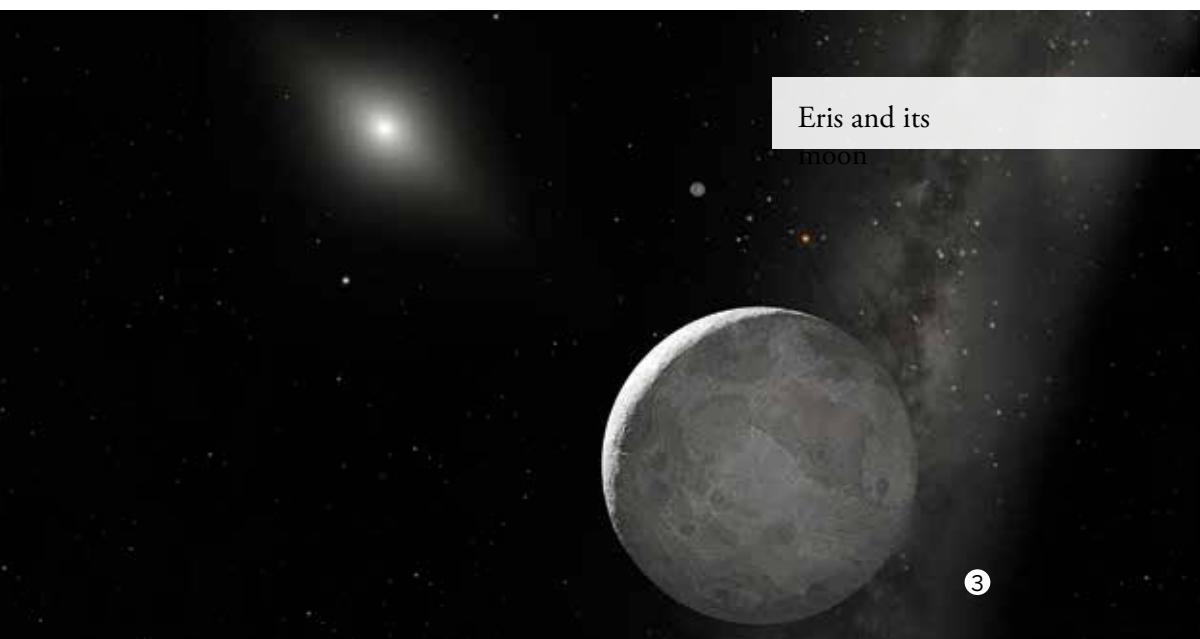
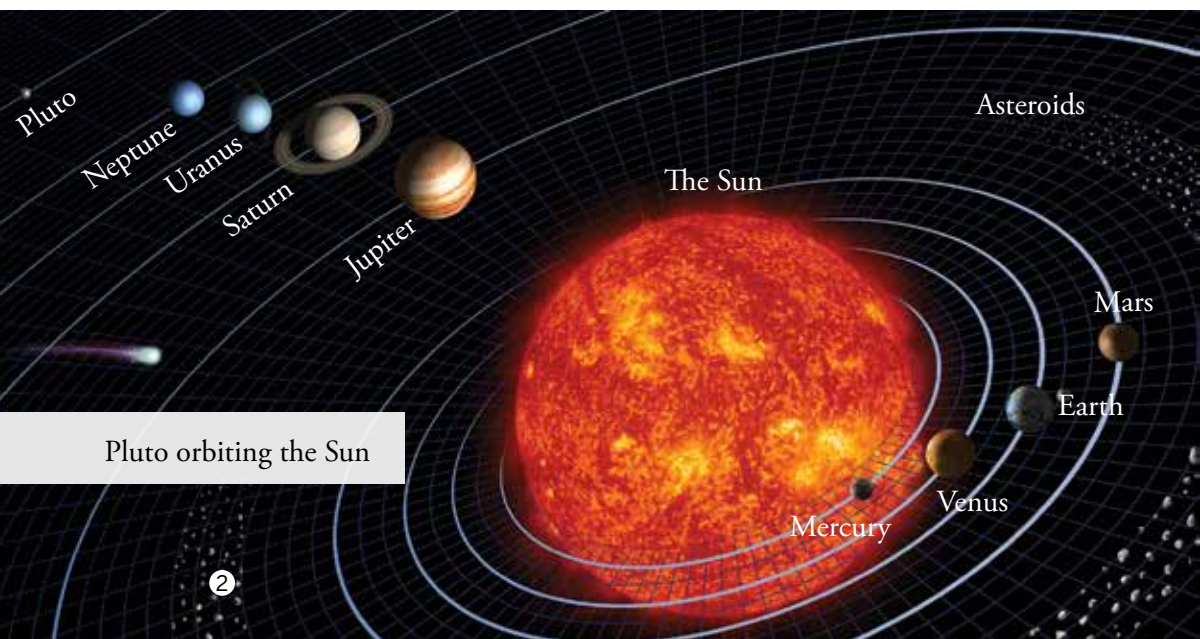


These small, rocky objects went around the sun. But they weren't round. Since Pluto was round, and it orbited the sun, scientists added it to the list of the eight other planets orbiting the sun.

In the years after Pluto's discovery, telescopes improved. People could see farther and farther into the universe. Beginning in 1977, scientists found many other icy objects like Pluto. They were all found in an area beyond where Neptune orbits. In 2005, a scientist found an object in this area that was bigger than Pluto. It was later given the name **Eris**.

Now scientists had a big question to answer. What *was* a planet, exactly? At a meeting in 2006, they voted to define a planet. They had three choices. They could say Pluto was a planet. They could say there were twelve planets, including Pluto, Eris, and other large objects that had been discovered. Or they could say there were eight planets that met three rules.

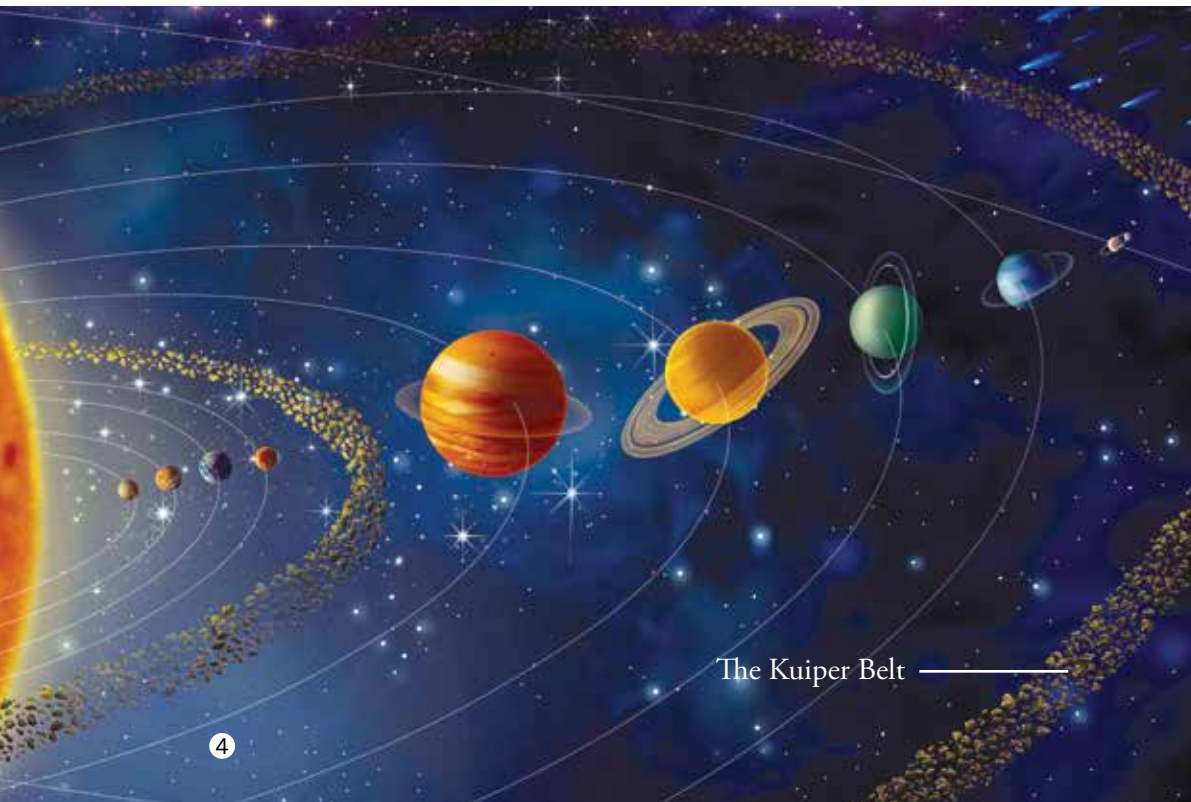
What were those three rules? To be a planet, an object must orbit the sun. It must be round. And it must be much bigger and heavier than other objects in its orbit.





The scientists voted for eight planets, which left Pluto out. It did not meet the third rule. There are many objects around Pluto's size in the area beyond Neptune. This area is called the **Kuiper Belt**.

Scientists will continue to study Pluto and other objects in the Kuiper Belt. For now, they call Pluto a **dwarf planet**. These objects meet the first two rules, but not the third.



## Glossary

**asteroids (n.):** objects orbiting the sun that are not round

**dwarf planet (n.):** an object that orbits the sun but does not meet all the rules to be a planet

**Eris (EHR-iss) (n.):** the largest known dwarf planet in the solar system

**Kuiper (KY-per) Belt (n.):** a group of small bodies in space beyond the orbit of Neptune

**orbiting (v.):** traveling around another object

**Level O**

Informational

What Happened to Planet Pluto?

Total Running Words: **338**

Lexile: **640L**



Published and distributed by **Amplify.**

