

Solar System Historical Milestones in North America

Solar System History · Answer Key · 18 Questions

1. Which North American observatory was the first to confirm the existence of Pluto in 1930?

A) Lowell Observatory

B) Mount Wilson Observatory

C) Palomar Observatory

D) Yerkes Observatory

2. In 1962, the Mariner 2 mission was the first to successfully conduct a flyby of another planet. What was that planet?

A) Mars

B) Venus

C) Mercury

D) Jupiter

3. Which American spacecraft was the first to achieve a soft landing on the surface of Mars in 1976?

A) Viking 1

B) Pathfinder

C) Curiosity

D) Spirit

4. The first American to orbit the Earth, John Glenn, flew in which spacecraft in 1962?

A) Gemini 3

B) Freedom 7

C) Friendship 7

D) Liberty Bell 7

5. In 1989, the Voyager 2 spacecraft provided the first close-up images of which planet's rings and moons?

A) Uranus

B) Neptune

C) Saturn

D) Jupiter

6. Which mission launched from Cape Canaveral in 1977 carried a 'Golden Record' containing sounds and images of Earth?

- A) Pioneer 10
- B) Voyager 1**
- C) Voyager 2
- D) Pioneer 11

7. What was the name of the first U.S. space station, launched into orbit in 1973?

- A) Skylab**
- B) Salyut
- C) Mir
- D) International Space Station

8. In 1997, the Mars Pathfinder mission deployed which first-ever successful robotic rover on the Martian surface?

- A) Opportunity
- B) Sojourner**
- C) Curiosity
- D) Perseverance

9. Which American astronomer is credited with the 1929 discovery that the universe is expanding?

- A) Percival Lowell
- B) Edwin Hubble**
- C) Carl Sagan
- D) Clyde Tombaugh

10. What was the primary goal of the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) launched by NASA in 2009?

- A) Mapping lunar resources**
- B) Testing fusion engines
- C) Searching for Martian water
- D) Monitoring solar flares

11. The 1965 Mariner 4 mission was significant for providing the first close-up images of which planet's cratered surface?

- A) Venus
- B) Mars**
- C) Mercury
- D) Moon

12. Which U.S. satellite, launched in 1958, discovered the Van Allen radiation belts surrounding Earth?

- A) Explorer 1**
- B) Vanguard 1
- C) Sputnik 1
- D) Telstar 1

13. In 1973, which probe became the first spacecraft to traverse the asteroid belt and visit Jupiter?

- A) Pioneer 10**
- B) Pioneer 11
- C) Voyager 1
- D) Voyager 2

14. Which space telescope, launched in 1990 from the Space Shuttle Discovery, fundamentally changed our understanding of the solar system's scale?

- A) Spitzer
- B) Hubble**
- C) Chandra
- D) Kepler

15. In 1967, which mission resulted in the tragic fire that led to major safety redesigns of the Command Module?

- A) Apollo 1**
- B) Apollo 7
- C) Apollo 11
- D) Gemini 8

16. Which planet was discovered by William Herschel in 1781, though later identified as a solar system component by North American scientists?

- A) Neptune
- B) Uranus**
- C) Saturn
- D) Pluto

17. The 'Messenger' mission was the first American spacecraft to orbit which planet, starting in 2011?

- A) Mercury**
- B) Venus
- C) Mars
- D) Saturn

18. In 1969, the Apollo 11 mission landed on the Moon. Which specific lunar region did they touch down in?

A) Sea of Tranquility

B) Ocean of Storms

C) Sea of Serenity

D) Sea of Clouds