

Cosmic Curiosities in Coinage

Numismatics · Answer Key · 13 Questions

1. Which planet, commonly depicted on ancient coinage due to its association with the Roman god of war, has had its orbit precisely mapped and refined by numerous space missions, including NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter?

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

2. A specific lunar feature, the Mare Imbrium, has been referenced or alluded to on coinage. Which mission successfully landed the first human on the Moon, a celestial body whose formation is often theorized to involve a giant impact event, a process studied in astrophysics?

- A) Apollo 8
- B) Apollo 11**
- C) Gemini 4
- D) Voyager 1

3. The planet Jupiter, named after the king of Roman gods, features on certain commemorative coins. Its Great Red Spot, a persistent anticyclonic storm, is a phenomenon studied extensively by atmospheric scientists analyzing gas giant dynamics, similar to studies of Earth's weather patterns.

- A) Which space probe provided the first close-up images of the Great Red Spot?
- B) Pioneer 10**
- C) Galileo
- D) Juno
- E) Cassini

4. Comets, often depicted in art and sometimes on coinage, are icy bodies that originate from the outer solar system. The Rosetta mission's Philae lander, tasked with studying Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, provided unprecedented data on cometary composition and origin, relevant to planet formation theories.

- A) Which specific region of the solar system is considered the primary reservoir for long-period comets?
- B) Kuiper Belt**
- C) Oort Cloud
- D) Asteroid Belt
- E) Heliosphere

5. Saturn, known for its iconic rings and often featured on coinage, is a gas giant whose atmospheric composition is predominantly hydrogen and helium. The Cassini-Huygens mission extensively studied Saturn and its moons, revealing details about atmospheric dynamics and ring structure.

A) What is the primary composition of Saturn's rings?

B) Volcanic rock and dust

C) Water ice particles and some rocky debris

D) Metallic asteroids

E) Frozen gases like methane and ammonia

6. Mercury, the smallest planet in our solar system and a subject of occasional numismatic interest, is characterized by its heavily cratered surface. The MESSENGER mission provided detailed mapping of Mercury, revealing evidence of ancient volcanic activity and significant amounts of water ice in permanently shadowed craters.

A) What is the primary factor contributing to the presence of water ice in Mercury's polar craters?

B) Ongoing outgassing from the planet's core

C) Impacts from comets and asteroids carrying water

D) Condensation from solar wind particles

E) Sublimation from subsurface permafrost

7. The Sun, a star central to our solar system and a symbol of power on some coins, undergoes nuclear fusion. The Parker Solar Probe is designed to study the Sun's outer corona, an environment with temperatures exceeding millions of degrees Celsius, and understand the solar wind.

A) What is the primary fuel for nuclear fusion in the Sun?

B) Helium

C) Carbon

D) Hydrogen

E) Oxygen

8. The planet Uranus, a distant ice giant often featured on speculative or themed coinage, has a unique axial tilt that causes extreme seasonal variations. The Voyager 2 mission provided the only close-up observations of Uranus, revealing its complex magnetic field and ring system.

A) Approximately how many degrees is Uranus's axial tilt from its orbital plane?

B) 23.5

C) 90

D) 98

E) 180

9. Neptune, the outermost known planet, a gas giant with a vibrant blue hue, has been depicted on various commemorative coins. Its atmosphere is known for its fast-moving winds, reaching supersonic speeds. The Voyager 2 mission also provided crucial data on Neptune's atmosphere and its largest moon, Triton.

A) What is the approximate maximum speed of winds measured in Neptune's atmosphere?

B) 500 mph

C) 1,200 mph

D) 2,000 mph

E) 3,000 mph

10. Pluto, once classified as a planet and occasionally appearing on coinage, is now designated as a dwarf planet in the Kuiper Belt. The New Horizons mission provided the first detailed images of Pluto, revealing a geologically diverse and surprisingly active surface.

A) What is the primary reason Pluto is classified as a dwarf planet?

B) Its small size

C) Its irregular orbit

D) Its inability to clear its orbital neighborhood

E) Its atmospheric composition

11. Galaxies, vast collections of stars, gas, and dust, are fundamental to cosmology. Some speculative coinage might reference our Milky Way galaxy or distant ones. The Hubble Space Telescope has been instrumental in observing distant galaxies and understanding the expansion of the universe.

A) What is the approximate number of stars estimated to be in the Milky Way galaxy?

B) 10-100 million

C) 1-10 billion

D) 100-400 billion

E) 1-10 trillion

12. Black holes, regions of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape, are a subject of intense astronomical research and occasional artistic representation, which might inspire numismatic designs. The Event Horizon Telescope captured the first image of a black hole.

A) Which galaxy's supermassive black hole was first directly imaged by the Event Horizon Telescope?

B) Andromeda Galaxy

C) Messier 87

D) Milky Way Galaxy

E) Triangulum Galaxy

13. The concept of a 'shooting star' or meteor, often featured artistically, is the streak of light produced when a meteoroid enters Earth's atmosphere and burns up. The Perseid meteor shower, an annual event, originates from debris left by Comet Swift-Tuttle.

A) What is the typical size range of the particles that cause visible meteor showers?

- B) Dust to pebble-sized
- C) Boulder to car-sized
- D) Mountain-sized
- E) Asteroid-sized