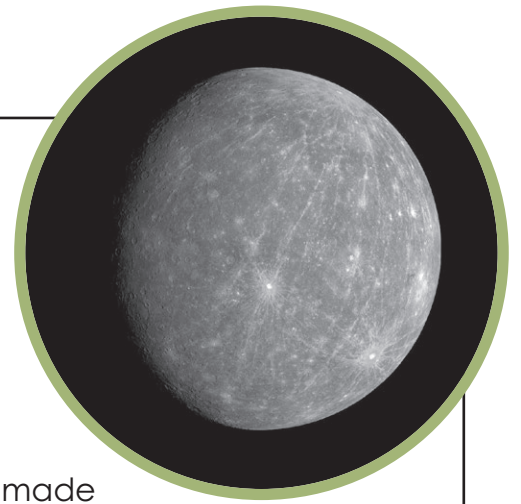


Name: _____

Mercury

By Cynthia Sherwood



Mercury is the planet nearest the sun. It's so close that if you were standing on Mercury, the sun would appear two and a half times bigger than what it looks like from here on Earth.

Even the best sunscreen wouldn't be enough on Mercury. The sun's rays are about seven times stronger than on Earth. Mercury is dry, very hot, and practically airless. Mercury is also the smallest planet in our solar system. Because it's often blocked by the glare of the sun, Mercury can be hard to see without a telescope.

Mercury is named after a Roman god who was a messenger known for his speed. As a planet, Mercury moves around the sun faster than any other. It revolves around the sun about once every 88 Earth days.

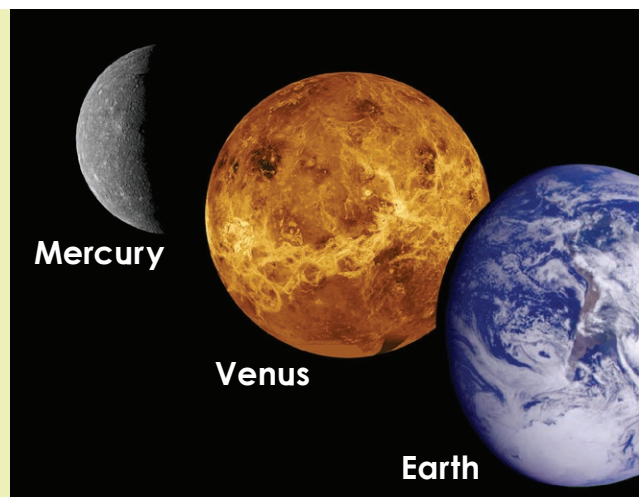
Mercury is made up of rock with iron at its core. Its surface looks a lot like our moon, with many craters. Radar images from Earth show that craters at Mercury's north and south poles may contain frozen water, or ice. Scientists couldn't believe it at first. Parts of Mercury reach 800 degrees Fahrenheit (427 degrees Celsius), so they definitely didn't expect to find ice! But it turns out the poles of Mercury are always in the shade of the sun, so they remain extremely cold.

By the way, you'd never be able to enjoy a blue sky on Mercury. Because there's no atmosphere, the sky always appears black. You might even see stars—during the daytime!

Did you know ...

Even though Mercury is the closest planet to the sun, it is not the hottest planet!

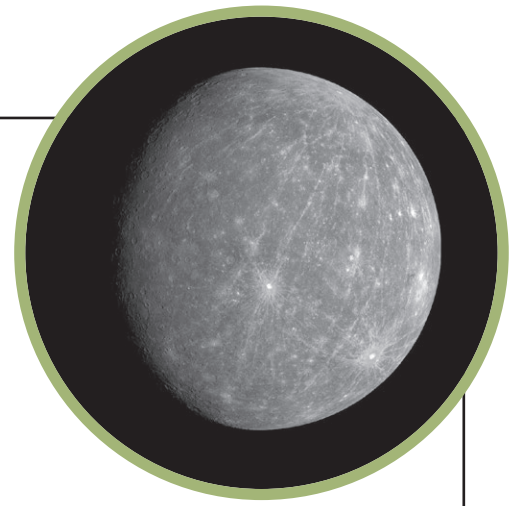
Venus, the second planet from the sun, has hotter temperatures than Mercury. This is because Venus has a thick layer of clouds that trap in heat like a blanket.



Name: _____

Mercury

By Cynthia Sherwood



1. Why is Mercury usually hard to see without a telescope?

2. Mercury is the closest planet to the sun, but Venus is the hottest. Why?

3. Mercury was named after the Roman god of speed. Why is this an appropriate name for the planet?

4. How is it possible for Mercury to have frozen ice?

- a. Mercury is a cold planet.
- b. Mercury has a different type of ice that can form in warm temperatures.
- c. Parts of Mercury are cold because they always face away from the sun.
- d. Mercury has ice because it moves so quickly around the sun.

5. What does the underlined word mean in the sentence below?

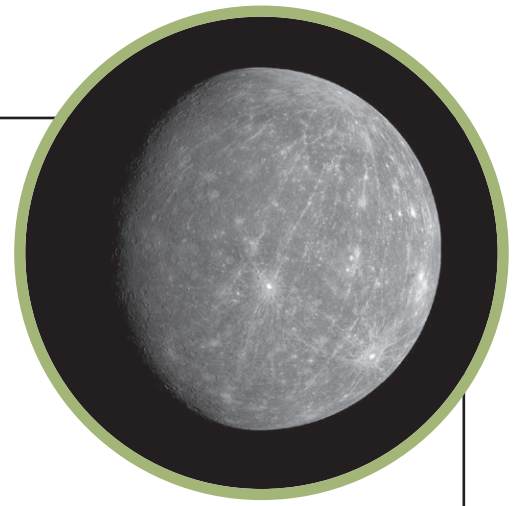
Because there's no atmosphere, the sky always appears black.

- a. layer of air or gas
- b. living things
- c. soil or craters
- d. volcano activity

ANSWER KEY

Mercury

By Cynthia Sherwood



1. Why is Mercury usually hard to see without a telescope?

It's often blocked by the sun's glare.

2. Mercury is the closest planet to the sun, but Venus is the hottest. Why?

Venus has clouds that trap in heat like a blanket.

3. Mercury was named after the Roman god of speed. Why is this an appropriate name for the planet?

Mercury travels around the sun very quickly.

4. How is it possible for Mercury to have frozen ice?

a. Mercury is a cold planet.

b. Mercury has a different type of ice that can form in warm temperatures.

c. Parts of Mercury are cold because they always face away from the sun.

d. Mercury has ice because it moves so quickly around the sun.

5. What does the underlined word mean in the sentence below?

Because there's no atmosphere, the sky always appears black.

a. layer of air or gas

b. living things

c. soil or craters

d. volcano activity