

Fun With Facts: Enjoying Reference Books

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Five Ways to Organize Information

1. Alphabetical (dictionaries, phone books)
2. Time (fiction, histories)
3. Place (atlases, travel guidebooks)
4. Category (types of rocks, school subjects)
5. Continuum (most to least, numbers)

Idea: Have children reorganize information in various ways to look for patterns.

Setting Up Your “Classroom”

1. ***Alphabet cards*** — use for activities with alphabetical order as well as handwriting.
2. ***Time line*** — hung high in the room where it’s visible at all times. Make your own time line with rolled paper or wide adding machine tape and mark in 100 year increments. Introduce B.C. and A.D. as well as the key eras and events in history listed below. Then use the quiz in this handout to “test” students again and again until they’ve memorized this basic outline of western history.

Ancient Egypt, 3000 B. C. to 715 B.C. (picture of Sphinx or Pyramids)

Ancient Greece, 800 B.C. to 300 B.C. (picture of the Parthenon)

Ancient Rome, 500 B.C. to 455 A.D. (picture of the Colosseum)

Birth of Christ, c. 1 A.D. (nativity scene)

Middle Ages, 476 A.D. to 1450 A.D. (pictures of castles)

Columbus, 1492 A.D. (drawing of Columbus’ ships)

U.S.A. began, 1776 A.D. (picture of Liberty Bell or U.S. flag)

More ideas: As you study events in all areas of the curriculum, refer to the time line to place them in context. If you study a historical unit, such as American History, make a vertical time line and build it as you go. Save time lines from various units and place them side by side to make comparisons and look for patterns. Vertical time lines can also be used in a unit on inventions. Build one time line for transportation inventions, one for communication, one for clothing, food, health, etc. Look for patterns and ideas which led to other ideas. A reproducible blank time line is in this handout.

3. ***Maps*** — preferably large ones, visible at all times. Put a map on the kitchen table and cover with a clear plastic tablecloth, or hang maps the halls, even put one on the floor (under plastic).

World Map. (Natl. Geographic, 70” x 49”, product #02690, \$12.95.)

U.S. Map. (Natl. Geographic, 70” x 49”, product #02208, \$12.95.)

Order from National Geographic Society, 1145 17th Street NW,

Washington D.C. 20036, telephone 1-800-638-4077.

Large map of your state. Check with United States Geological Society.

Idea: Use these maps to teach place names in a five-minutes-a-day activity that builds over time. First week practice continents, second week continents and oceans, third week continents, oceans and major mountain ranges, etc. Add something new each week and keep reviewing and testing everything previously learned. After awhile, start a map game. Put slips of paper containing place names you’ve studied in a can. A student draws one and tries to find it on a map within 10 seconds.

4. **Possible additional reference resources:**

Set of encyclopedias. I recommend <i>The World Book</i>	Thesaurus	Globe
Almanacs — preferably one for each child	Cookbooks	
Dictionaries — preferably one for each child	Chronicles	
World atlas	Travel guides	
Large calendar	Telephone book	
Guinness Book of World Records.	Yellow pages	

Ideas for Integrating the Curriculum Using Reference Books

1. Take advantage of current events. Have children use their almanacs to look up countries in the news. Compare their statistics with those of the U.S. or other familiar countries. This is a great opportunity to make up “real” math problems.
2. Build background for reading. Look up information about the locale of a story, the time frame in which it happened, the famous people involved, etc.
3. Provide flexible mixed review. Try the Facts Game: make game cards with facts you want students to remember *forever* in any subject area. For example: the capital of the U.S., the number of quarts in a gallon, the parts of an atom. Make up games and use these cards for continual review. Add cards throughout the year as you teach key concepts in any subject. Use any game board or have children make up their own games and rules.
4. Teach a cross-curricular unit on space. Have students color and cut planets and make a solar system on long black paper (reproducible patterns in this handout). On this scale, the sun would be six *feet* in diameter. Next, pretend to shrink the sun to just $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in diameter to keep the scale accurate for the following activity. Go outside to pace out the relative distance between planets: Sun to Mercury, $\frac{3}{4}$ pace; Mercury to Venus, 1 long pace; Venus to Earth, $1\frac{1}{3}$ pace; Earth to Mars, $1\frac{1}{4}$ pace; Mars to Jupiter, 14 paces; Jupiter to Saturn, 16 paces; Saturn to Uranus, 35 paces; Uranus to Neptune, 41 paces; Neptune to Pluto, 34 paces (on average). On this scale, the nearest star, Alpha Centauri, would be 13 *miles* away!
5. Challenge students with reference activities. Reward their achievements.
Memorization challenges: Gettysburg Address, manual alphabet, countries of South America, etc.
Passport Activity: Students get stamps in their passports for doing research on self-selected countries.

Time Line of World History

Name _____

Middle Ages

Ancient Egypt

Birth of Christ

Ancient Rome

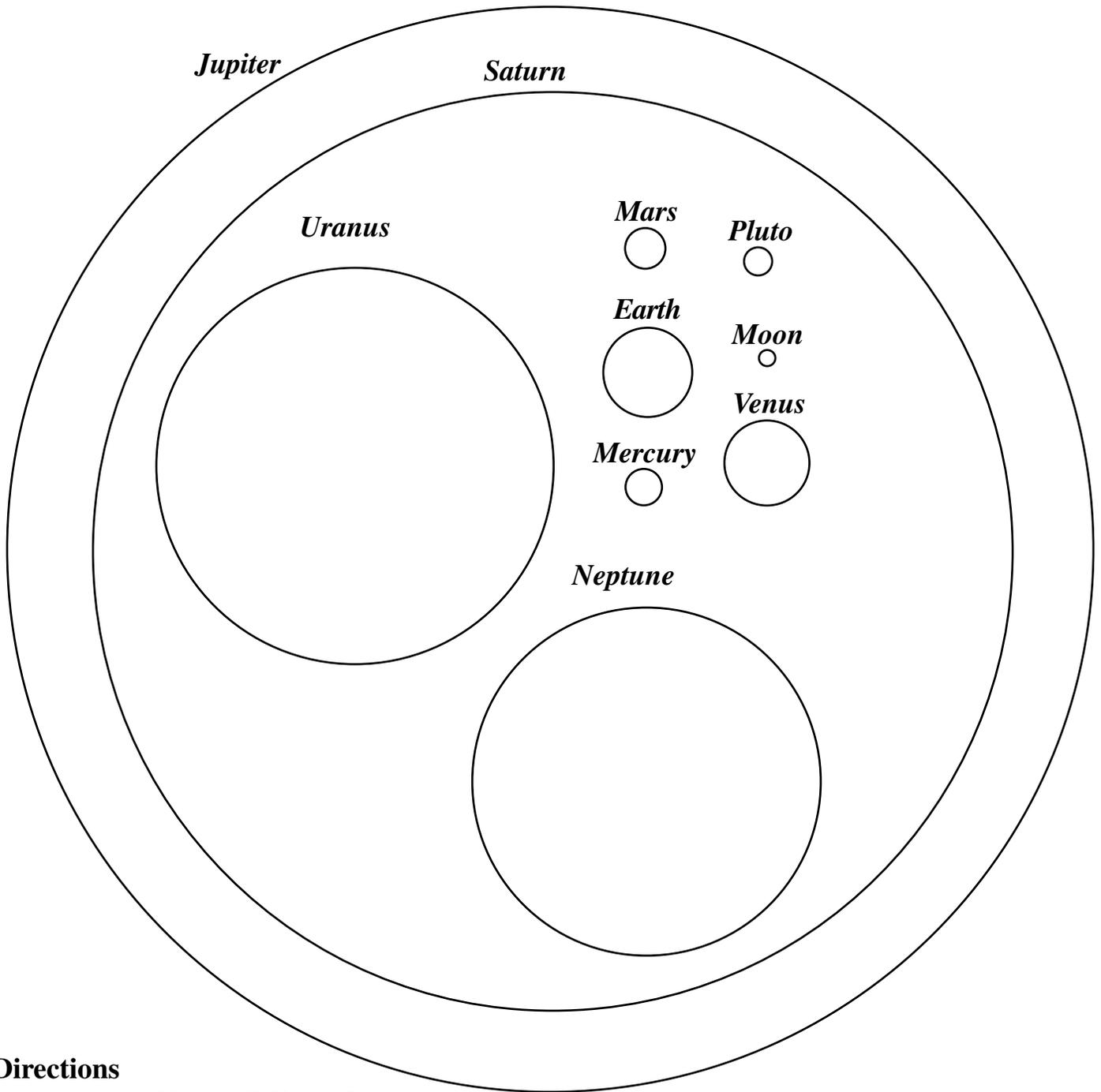
U.S.A. began

Columbus

Ancient Greece

Directions: Fill in the blank spaces above the time line with dates in 500 year increments. Include B.C. and A.D. Fill in the blank spaces below the line with one of the labels from the left.

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Directions

Do not cut anything until directed.

1. Color all but the two biggest planets. Use reference sources for correct colors. Do not cut.
2. Cut out Jupiter and trace it on a piece of white paper. Then cut out Saturn and trace it. Color in the circles you traced. Remember Jupiter's red spot. If you wish, make rings for Saturn.
3. Get a piece of long black paper.
4. Get yellow paper. Make a part of the sun to put on the black paper at one end.
5. Starting with Mercury, cut out each colored planet in order and glue it down. Spread out the planets so that all fit on the black paper.

