

Mars: the red planet

Language

Space exploration vocabulary, *although* and *despite*

Level

Upper intermediate (equivalent to CEF level B2)

Comment

This infograph lesson looks at interesting facts and figures about Mars.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Tell students to look at exercise 1. Tell them to write the names of the planets individually, then check with a partner. Take the opportunity to remind them that Pluto is a dwarf planet. It was initially classified as a planet, but was excluded from the list of planets in 2006. Practise the pronunciation of each planet before moving on to the next exercise.
- 2 Ask students to read the infograph about Mars and then turn over their papers when they have finished. You could give students the infograph as a printed worksheet or display it on the board from the Global website. If you project the infograph from the website, give them enough time to read each section before removing the image. Students match each heading to its function. Ask them to check their answers with a partner. If you have time, you may like to ask them to brainstorm any of the information that they remember from each section. Students read the infograph again to check their answers.
- 3 Now ask them to look at exercise 3. Students work in pairs or small groups to find the vocabulary in the infograph. Alternatively, they could do this exercise individually and then check their answers with a partner. Write the answers on the board during feedback and work on the pronunciation of difficult sounds.
- 4 Ask students to look at exercise 4 and complete the sentences from memory. Ask them to check their answers using the infograph. Clarify the function of *although* and *despite*.
- 5 Ask students to look at exercise 5. Ask them to make complex sentences using *despite* and *although*. Remind students that *despite* is followed by a noun or gerund and *although* is followed by a subject and verb. Be prepared to give them more examples of *despite* and gerund forms if necessary.
- 6 Organise your class into small groups of three or four. You may want to demonstrate the activity first by asking a stronger student a discussion question to get some feedback. Students discuss the questions in small groups. Get whole class feedback when they have finished.

Answer key

1

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Neptune, and Uranus

2

- 1 Mars missions
- 2 Mars
- 3 Colonisation
- 4 Mars versus Earth
- 5 Life on Mars

3

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| 1 layer | 6 probe |
| 2 homogeneous | 7 launch |
| 3 similarity, likeness | 8 outperform |
| 4 harsh | 9 melt |
| 5 habitable, hospitable | 10 thrive |

4

- 1 *Despite* its likeness Mars is a cold, dry, desert-like planet with a thin atmosphere.
- 2 The temperatures are so low that only Antarctica on Earth is comparable, *although* Mars is much colder.
- 3 *Although* and *despite* are used to express contrasting or surprising information.

5

Colonisation of other planets is possible, *although* it would take centuries of extremely difficult work to do.

Space exploration is important for the human race *despite* it using up vast amounts of important finance.

Mars has similar qualities to the Earth, *although* its extreme conditions would make it practically impossible to live on.

Unmanned probes and robots are used for space exploration *despite* the fact that humans could do a better job.

6

Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful for either you or your students.

<http://quest.nasa.gov/mars/>

http://meteorite.unm.edu/site_media/pdf/BringingLife.pdf

http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/life_mars.html

http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/space/solarsystem/sun_and_planets/mars

<http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/profile.cfm?Object=Mars>