

## Lesson 3

## READ THIS STORY #2, Basic

## The Space Age

The Space Age began in 1957 when the first living space travelers, a dog and a monkey, were rocketed into orbit.

Up until then, we believed that our solar system consisted of nine planets that orbited our sun. We knew that some planets had moons. We knew there were thousands of chunks of rocks of various sizes, called asteroids, in space.

Small masses of solid material sometimes fall into our atmosphere. If they burn up before they hit the ground, we call them meteor showers or “falling stars.” One huge meteorite did not burn up and instead, crashed into the earth about 20,000 years ago. It formed Sunset Crater in Arizona.

Earth is thought to be the only planet that has oceans of liquid water and supports life. Scientists want to determine if it would be possible for man to live on one of the other planets. That’s why scientists are very excited about the prospects of exploring space, which they call “The Last Frontier.”

As our technology has improved, we have launched many space probes to increase our base of information. More than twenty-six thousand man-made objects have gone into orbit around the earth. Despite a near miss in 1996, more than seventeen thousand of them have come back down to earth without harming any individual on the ground.