Learning about the Moon

by Randolph Ward

1   There is one side of the moon we will never see from Earth. Some call it the far side of the moon. For many years, people could only guess what the far side of the moon looked like.

2   Finally some scientists figured out a way to look at the far side of the moon. They sent a spaceship to space. The ship circled the moon. All the while, its cameras took pictures of the moon's surface.

3   These pictures helped answer many questions. They showed that the far side of the moon is much like the side we can see from Earth. Its surface is very dry. It has no water or plants. It also has craters. A *crater* is a deep mark left on the moon. Rocks that crash into the moon make craters.

4   People now know what the far side of the moon looks like. But why will we never see it from Earth? In part, it is because of the moon's shape. Did you know that the moon is not perfectly round? It is shaped a little bit like an egg. The side of the moon that faces Earth is like one point on an egg. The far side of the moon is like the egg's other point.

5   A force from Earth pulls on the moon. This force is called *gravity.* Gravity makes Earth act like a magnet. It pulls objects toward Earth's center. Earth's gravity pulls hardest on objects that are closest to Earth. Remember that the moon is like an egg. Earth pulls hardest on the point of the moon that is closest to Earth. The far side of the moon is less affected by Earth's gravity.

6   There are many other things to know about the moon. What moon mysteries would you like to solve?

COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a* or *b*.

1 People now know about
  a the side of the moon that doesn't face Earth.
  b only the side of the moon they can see from Earth.

2 People first learned about the moon's other side when
  a men in spaceships went to see it.
  b a spaceship flew around the moon.

3 The moon's shape is like
  a a circle.
  b an oval.

4 A crater looks something like a
  a tall mountain.
  b deep hole.

5 When people say that something is like the "far side of the moon," they most likely mean that it is something people know
  a all about.
  b little about.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

1 machines for taking pictures (2)
2 outside of a thing (3)
3 turned toward (4)
4 something that stops or changes the way an object moves; gravity is an example of this (5)
5 a piece of stone or metal that can attract iron or steel (5)

C Read the words you wrote. Which one best fits in each sentence? Write the word.

6 People first saw the _____ of the far side of the moon in 1959.
7 A spaceship with _____ took pictures of the moon.
8 The same side of the moon always _____ Earth.
9 The _____ sticks to the steel door on our freezer.
10 Gravity is a _____ that pulls on objects.

D Who is that person?
She is an astronaut.
Look at her space suit!

A sentence that asks a question ends with a question mark (?). A sentence that tells something ends with a period (.). A sentence that tells something with strong feelings ends with an exclamation point (!).

Read each sentence. If it should end with a question mark, write *question.* If it should end with a period, write *period.* If it should end with an exclamation point, write *exclamation.*

1 Did you see the moon last night
2 Look out for that crater
3 It was a dark, orange color
4 It will look that way again next month
5 Are you going to look for it

E Chris is going to write about what he likes to do at the library. Read each item. If it fits his main topic, write *Yes.* If it doesn't, write *No.*

6 Read about stars
7 Look up facts about the moon
8 Watch TV
9 Listen to stories about space
10 Play hide and seek

Photo: NASA.