

Comprehension 12

Read the passage carefully and answer the following questions in complete sentences.

Mars is often considered the most interesting of the planets. It is the fourth planet from the sun and is also the second smallest. It takes around 2 earth years to orbit the sun, and its days are very similar in length to an Earth day. It is often called the red planet due to its high iron content. The planet has two poles which have ice on them. This is crucial
5 because it means that at some point, the planet had water on it. This is further backed up by the fact that various valleys and canyons are visible on the surface of the planet which suggest that water once flowed on the surface of Mars. Water is clearly an indication that the planet could have, at some point, sustained some kind of life. This has important implications for human life on other planets and colonisation. Experiments carried out by
10 German scientists when they simulated Mars conditions found that lichen could survive.

Mars has two moons, their names are Deimos and Phobos. They are very much like our moon.

Much like Mercury and Venus, Mars can easily be seen from the Earth and so it is difficult to judge when it was first discovered. There is evidence that it was known by the
15 Egyptians, Greeks and the Romans. In fact, the reddish colour of Mars meant that it was of particular interest to scientists and so by the nineteenth century, the surface of it had been mapped, and various mountains and valleys had been named.

The air on Mars consists mainly of carbon dioxide. The pressure is quite similar to the Earth. The atmosphere is almost nonexistent and as such it is vulnerable to radiation from
20 the sun. However, temperatures are fairly consistent. This leads us nicely onto exploration of Mars and why it is of such interest to scientists.

In fiction, Mars is often seen as being home to alien races. So far, no life has been found on the planet although the presence of water is a strong signifier that there was, at least at some point, some life on the planet.

25 Mars has been explored fairly extensively. It has had several vehicles landed on it which have taken samples, photographs and relayed thousands of pieces of data. Our knowledge of the surface is thus relatively good. Mars is interesting because it has the tallest mountain in the solar system, as well as the deepest gorge. The mountain is around three times the height of mount Everest.

30 As of yet, no people have landed on the surface of Mars. However, there are plans in the future to complete a mission like this, as early as 2020. The problem with travelling to Mars is that it will take several months to get there. Therefore there needs to be enough food and fuel in order to get them there safely. This means that it will take a huge rocket to get them into space. People are still curious whether or not they will find life on the planet.



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1. What implications does water on Mars have? (2 marks)

2. What does the word “they” (line 9) refer to? (2 marks)

3. Why would a manned flight be so difficult? (2 marks)

4. Why is Mars so interesting? (2 marks)

5. How is Mars similar to Earth? (2 marks)

6. What does the word “this” (line 30) refer to? (2 marks)
