

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

## Star Parties

1 As cars travel on the long road up the hill, their drivers shut off the headlights. Passengers jump out, chattering excitedly. They walk slowly to join the crowd on the hill. All around, the land is quiet and dark. No streetlights or house lights glow. Everyone gazes up at the night sky. This is a star party.



Visitors enjoy a star party at McDonald Observatory in West Texas.

Frank Cianciolo/McDonald Observatory

2 A star party is a gathering where people study the stars and other objects in the sky. Because city skies are usually bright with lights at night, many star parties take place in the country. In a dark sky, stars can be easily seen. From beginners to experts, everyone is welcome at a star party. When people gaze at the sky, there is always something new to discover.

### What Are You Staring At?

3 At most star parties, telescopes are set up so that people can study different areas of the sky. Telescopes help make faraway objects appear closer. Some telescopes may be aimed at constellations, or star groupings. Others may be pointed at the moon. At certain times of the year, partygoers may even get to see the light of a meteor shower streaking across the sky.

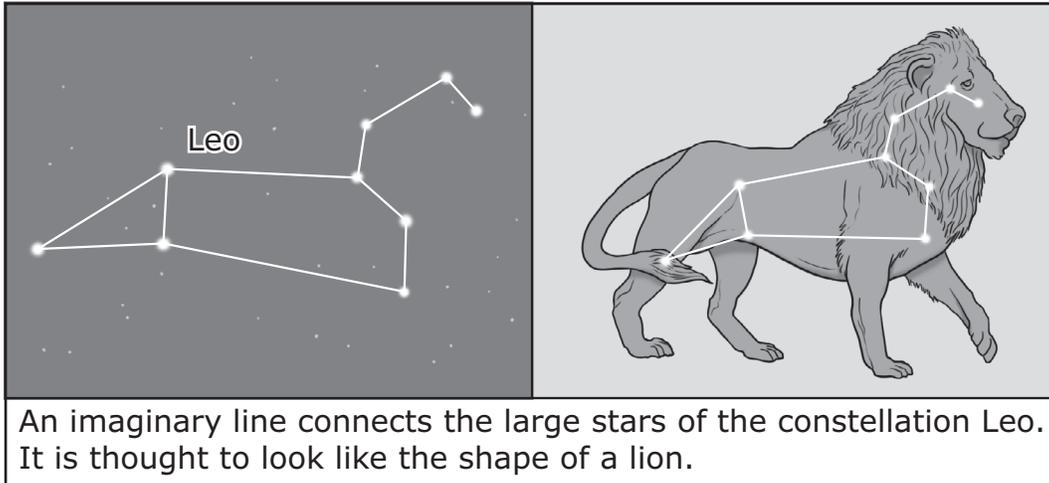


A telescope makes it easier to see objects in the night sky.

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4 Star charts and guidebooks are great resources. You can use these tools to find information about where to look in the night sky to see special stars and planets. Star charts and guidebooks can be found on the Internet or in a library. You can download or copy a star chart and study it before going to a star party. It will help you understand what you are seeing.

- 5 At star parties, experts may describe what people are seeing. They may identify special stars, planets, or star clusters. Some may share stories, or myths, about the constellations. Because these stars appear to be grouped into the shapes of animals or people, different cultures have made up stories about them. A Greek myth, for example, tells a story about a lion named Leo. Use your imagination to find an animal in the night sky. Then you can share your own story at the star party!



### **How Do You Get Ready for a Star Party?**

- 6 All you really need for a star party is a clear night sky. However, there are some things you can do before you go to a star party to help you have a great experience.
- 7 Just as the view of the sky changes, so does the weather. Be sure to bring along a jacket or sweater. Since you view stars in the evening, the night air may be colder than you expect.
- 8 You may also be surprised by the darkness of the night sky. If you need some light during the star party, do not use a regular flashlight. The bright white light from common flashlights makes it difficult for your eyes to focus on the night sky. Red light, on the other hand, does not ruin your night vision. You can purchase a red flashlight or make your own.
- 9 Every evening the sky presents a new opportunity to study and learn about the stars and other objects. With a little preparation, your adventure under the night sky is sure to be a success!

## Make Your Own Stargazing Flashlight

Gather these materials:

Red plastic wrap or red cloth 	Scissors 	Flashlight 	Rubber band 
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Follow these directions:

1. Cut the red plastic or cloth into a square. The square should be slightly larger than the lighted end of the flashlight.
2. Cover the lighted end of the flashlight with the red plastic or cloth. Wrap the edges of the plastic or cloth around the sides of the flashlight.
3. Secure the plastic or cloth to the flashlight with the rubber band.

Your stargazing flashlight will look like this.



Now you are ready to head outside for your own nighttime star party!