

The Moon and Stars

Chapter 12: Beyond Earth · Topic 2

Key Concept

Because stars are so far away, they appear as tiny points of light in the night sky, even though many are far larger than our Sun. The changing shape of the Moon we observe, called phases (new moon, crescent, full moon, etc.), happens because we see different portions of its sunlit half as it orbits Earth — the Moon itself does not actually change shape. Ancient civilisations grouped visible stars into patterns called constellations, which were often used for storytelling, navigation, and tracking seasons.

Quick Revision Notes

- The Moon is Earth's only natural satellite and reflects sunlight rather than producing its own light.
- Stars are massive, hot balls of gas that produce their own light through nuclear reactions.
- The Sun is the closest star to Earth.
- The Moon's phases occur because we see different portions of its sunlit half as it orbits Earth.

Practice Questions

- 1 What is the key difference between a star and a planet?
- 2 Explain why the Moon appears to change shape throughout the month.
- 3 Why does the Sun appear so much bigger and brighter than other stars in the sky?