The Sun

The Sun is the star at the centre of our solar system. That is why it is called a solar system. The word solar means 'relating to the Sun'. The planets in our solar system stay together because the Sun is so big its gravity keeps us all locked in orbit.

Making Energy:

The Sun provides almost all the energy, light and heat needed on Earth mainly using hydrogen and helium. Energy is made at its core in the centre of the Sun's sphere. Around the core is the radiative zone which carries the energy to the next layer – the convection zone. It takes about 170,000 years for the energy to move from the core to the convection zone! The photosphere is at the Sun's surface and the energy gets to there from the convection zone in large bubbles. From here, the energy escapes (through the chromosphere and corona) and some of it comes to Earth. It takes about 8 minutes for heat to reach us from the Sun.

Did you know?

Surface temperature: 5505°C

Distance to Earth: 149.6 million km

Radius: 696,342 km

Circumference: 4,366,813 km (2,713,406 miles)

Mass: 1,989,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000kg

(About 1.3 million Earths could fit inside the Sun)

Lifespan:

The Sun is actually a yellow dwarf star and was created about 4.6 billion years ago. The Sun will eventually run out of energy and fade, but don't worry...this won't be for another 4.5 to 5.5 billion years yet! Before the Sun eventually fades, in an unimaginable time from now, it will get bigger and turn into what is called a 'red giant'. In 1.1 billion years from now, the Sun will be 10% brighter than it is today. This will make Earth a bit like a greenhouse – hot and moist. 3.5 billion years from now, it will be even brighter than that: at 40% more than it is today. This will be so hot that the oceans will boil and the ice will melt. It's safe to say that then there will be no life on Earth by then, but with space travel already making new discoveries and exploring other planets, where do you think humans will be by then?

1. What gases is the Sun mainly made from?

2. How long does it take energy to reach Earth from the Sun?

3. In the final paragraph the author uses the word 'unimaginable'. Why have they used this word?

4. What type of star is the Sun now?

5. List the different layers of the Sun from the centre to the outside.

6. What keeps our solar system of planets orbiting the Sun?

7. Solar means 'relating to the Sun'. Think of two (or more) examples where we use the word 'solar'.

8. Will the Sun last forever? If not, why not?

9. In the final paragraph it says that Earth will become 'a bit like a greenhouse'. A greenhouse is warm and moist inside because of the glass that lets heat and light in and keeps it in. Our Earth is not surrounded by glass, so what will let the heat and light in and keep it in?

10. Look at the final line - where do you think humans will be by then?