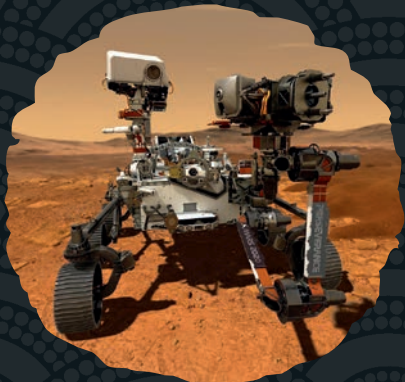


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PM

Astronomers have studied Mars for thousands of years. Space missions have helped scientists to learn much more about this dusty red planet. Some people want to set up a base on Mars so that humans can live there! But others think that learning about Mars will help people understand more about Earth, and why we need to protect it.



Information Report/Discussion

Nelson



Level  
25

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All About Mars  
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# All About Mars

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# All About Mars

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# All About Mars

## The Red Planet

Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun in our solar system, which is part of the Milky Way galaxy. From Earth, Mars often looks like a red star. Because of this, it has become known as “the red planet”.



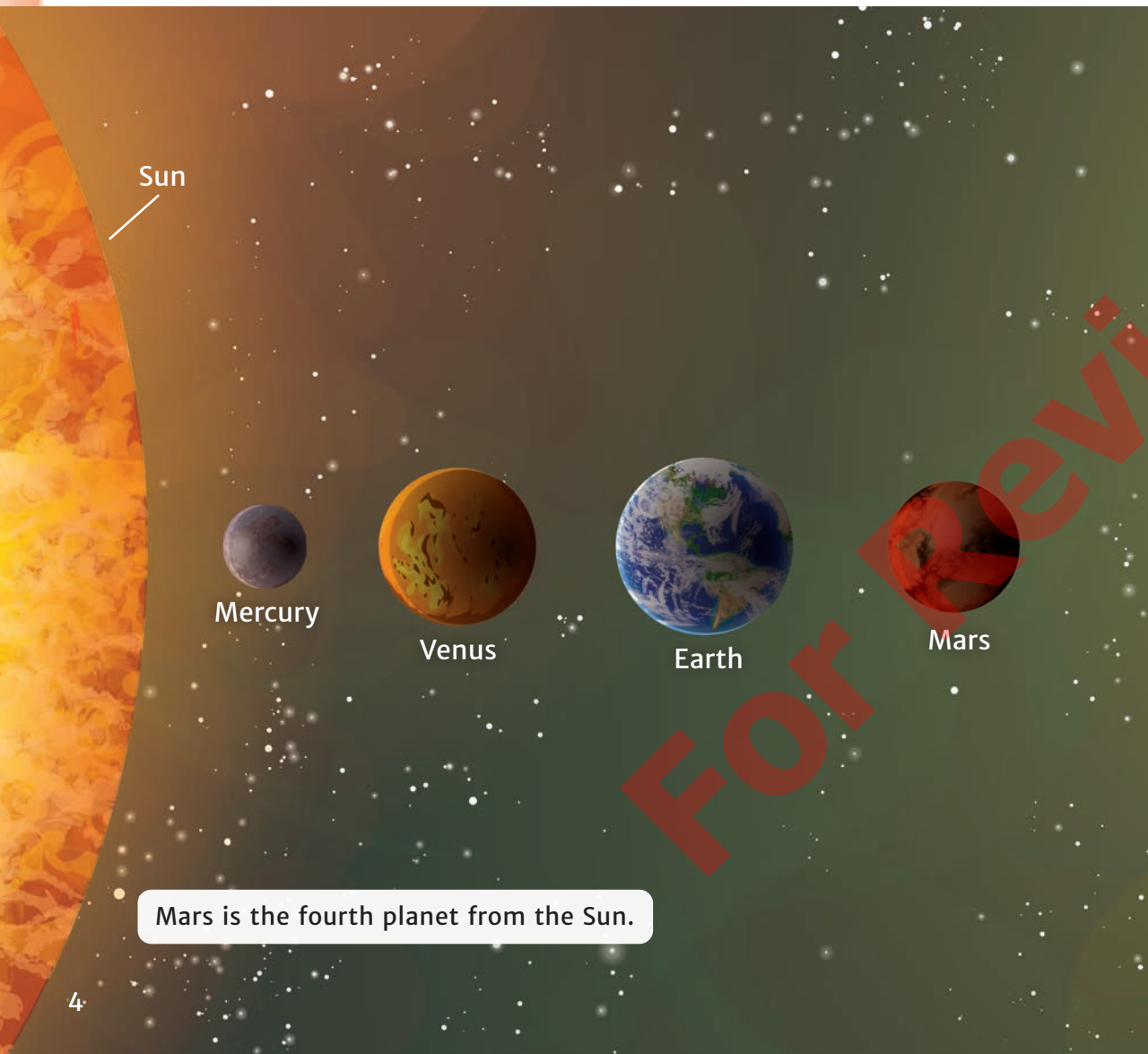
For thousands of years, people around the world have been fascinated by Mars. It has featured in the stories and myths of many cultures, including some First Nations cultures in Australia, New Zealand and North America.

The red planet is named after the ancient Roman god of war, called “Mars”. This is an artist’s impression of Mars, the Roman god.

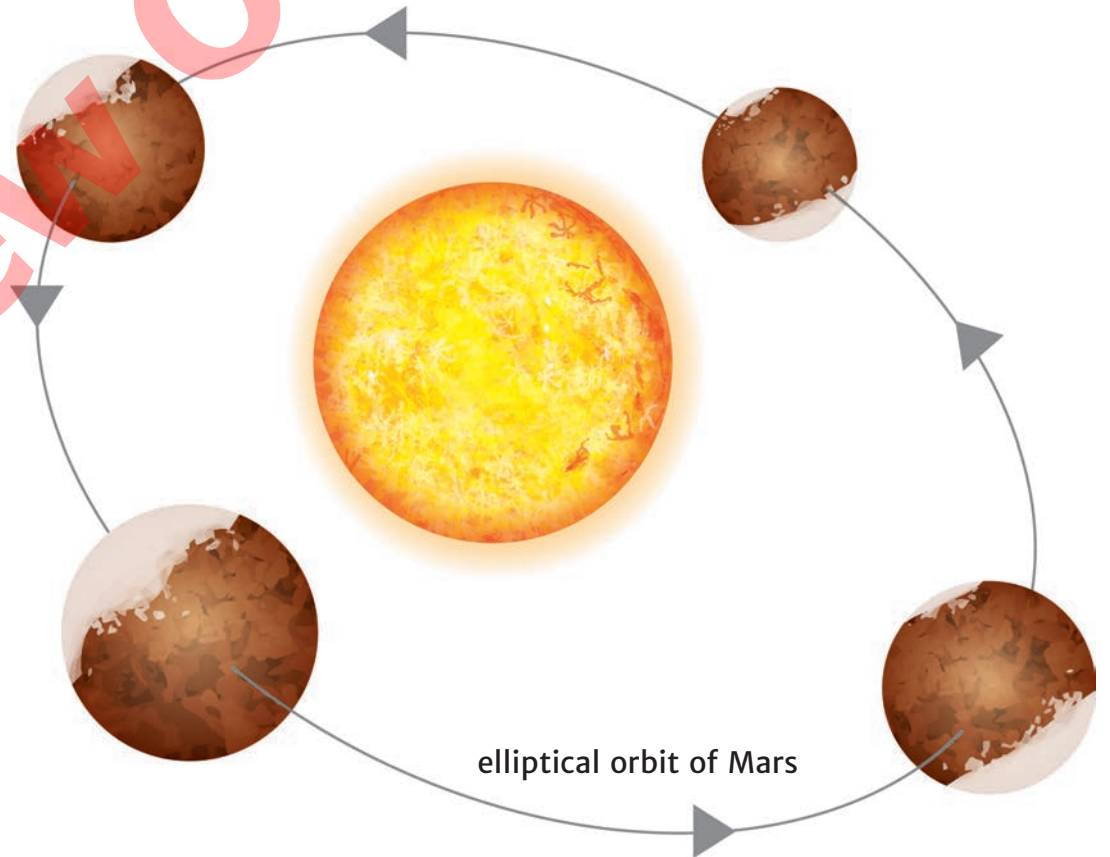


From Earth, Mars can be seen with the naked eye.

Mars is the fourth-closest planet to our Sun. The closest planets to the Sun are Mercury, Venus and Earth, in that order. Earth is about 149 million kilometres from the Sun, while Mars is about 228 million kilometres from the Sun.

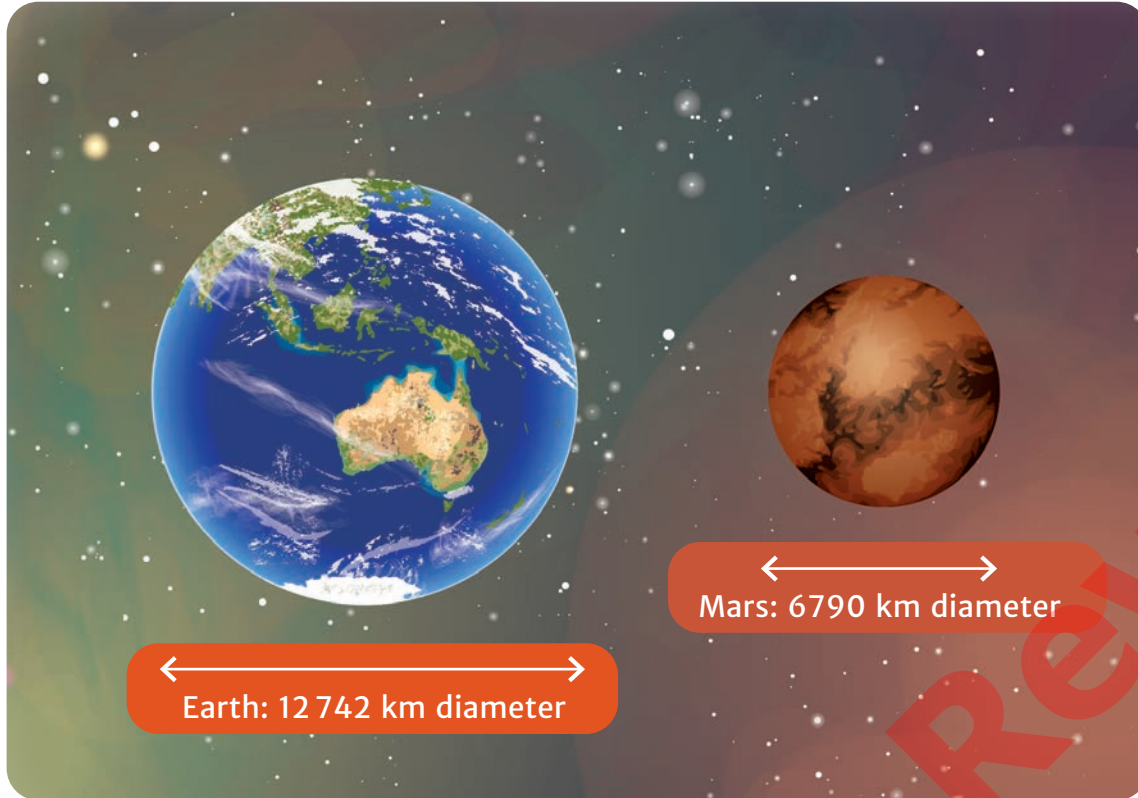


Like Earth and the other planets, Mars is always **orbiting** the Sun. It moves around the Sun in an **elliptical** path. This means that it does not orbit in a perfect circle, but rather in a slightly stretched circle, like the shape of an egg. It comes closer to the Sun at different points in its orbit.





Mars is about 6790 kilometres in **diameter** from one side to the other. It is about half as wide as Earth.

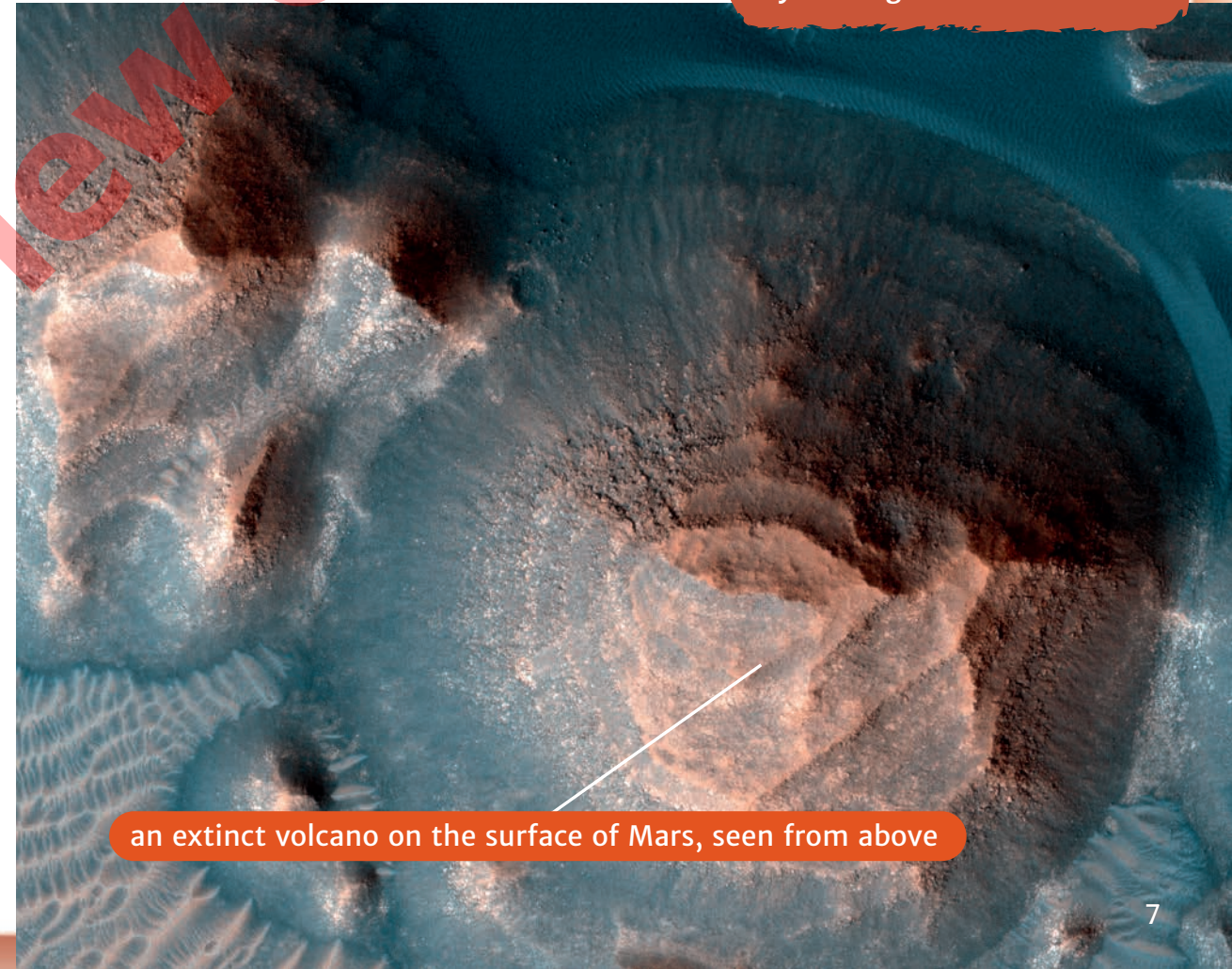


Mars is the second smallest planet in the solar system. It is only half the size of Earth.

Mercury is the only planet in the solar system that is smaller than Mars. Most of the other planets are much bigger, especially Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. However, compared to the Sun, all of the planets in the solar system are tiny.

Mars is a rocky, dusty planet, but it is like Earth in many ways. It spins around, like Earth does, and has many mountains and valleys. Mars also has **many extinct volcanoes**. At both of its poles, north and south, it has **ice caps**. These are large areas of frozen, salty water.

Billions of years ago, the surface of Mars was largely covered by oceans. Scientists have observed riverbeds and canyons made there long ago by moving water.



an extinct volcano on the surface of Mars, seen from above