

**Objective** Concepts (comet, Quaker, telescope, astronomy, knowledge, homophones-metal/medal, prefix “dis”- disagreed, “ly”-truly, contribution of women in science); Sight words (served, trace, realized, demanded, disagreed, refused, quote, truly)



Vocabulary	
<b>served</b>	<b>disagreed</b>
<b>trace</b>	<b>refused</b>
<b>realized</b>	<b>quote</b>
<b>demanded</b>	<b>truly</b>

## Miss Mitchell’s Comet

By: Sue Peterson

Maria Mitchell was born in 1818 in Massachusetts. She was raised as a Quaker. The Quaker religion values education equally for boys and girls. So although many other young girls could not attend school at this time, the Quaker families sent their daughters to school.

In fact, Maria’s father was her first principal. When Maria was 11, her father built his own school and she was a student in this school. Maria also served as a teaching assistant. A teaching assistant is someone who is a teacher’s helper.

Because Maria showed an early interest in the stars, Mr. Mitchell taught Maria about the telescope and astronomy. Astronomy is the study of the universe beyond the earth which includes stars, planets, comets, and galaxies.

Maria later opened her own school and then was offered a job as a librarian. During this time she continued to study astronomy.

In 1847, Maria discovered a comet by using her own telescope. The King of Denmark had offered gold medal prizes to anyone who discovered a comet with a telescope. She won one of these prizes for her comet discovery and this made her name very well-known throughout the world. She became the first professional female astronomer in the United States.

Maria was the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and also to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Later in her career, she worked for the U.S. Nautical Almanac Office to trace how the planet Venus yearly orbited.

Maria became professor of astronomy at Vassar College in 1865 and was named Director of the observatory there. Maria soon realized that she was paid much less as a woman professor. She demanded that the college pay her just as much as the men professors. Guess what? After asking for more money, she eventually received the same pay as the men professors.



Early years of Vassar College



Vassar College today

Maria believed in equality and disagreed with slavery so she refused to wear any clothing made from cotton since the slaves worked in the cotton fields in the South.

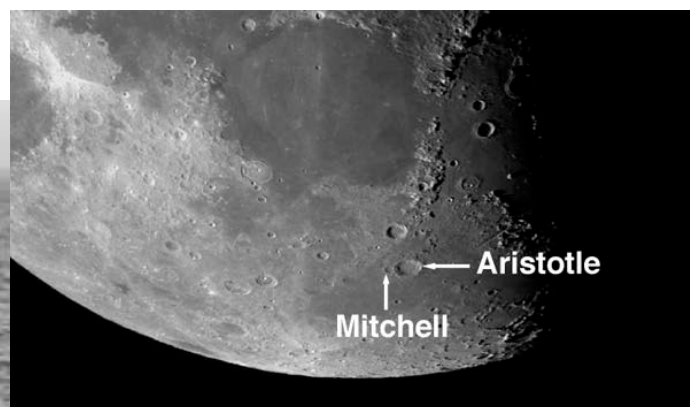
She helped start the American Association for the Advancement of Women and served as its president for three years. She was also one of the first women to be elected to the American Philosophical Society.

Maria died in 1889 at the age of 70. The Maria Mitchell Observatory in Nantucket, Massachusetts, is named in her honor. She was given many honors after her death. She is listed in the National Women's Hall of Fame, and both a World War II liberty ship, and the crater "Mitchell" on the Moon are named after her.

Maria Mitchell is well-known for her quote, "We have a hunger of the mind. We ask for all of the knowledge around us and the more we get, the more we desire." She truly loved learning and she truly was a great astronomer.



A WWII liberty ship named in Miss Mitchell's honor



The crater "Mitchell"

## Practice

### Multiple-Choice Questions (put an X in front of the correct answer)

1. The advantage of being a Quaker in 1818 helped Maria Mitchell \_\_\_\_\_.  
 a. learn to sew  
 b. babysit children  
 c. work in a factory  
 d. attend school
2. Maria's father was instrumental in helping Maria develop an interest in science. He taught her how to use a telescope and all about \_\_\_\_\_.  
 a. social studies  
 b. math  
 c. English  
 d. astronomy
3. Maria discovered a \_\_\_\_\_ and was awarded a gold medal prize from the King of Denmark.  
 a. meteor  
 b. star  
 c. cloud  
 d. comet

### Definitions (Write the meaning of each word as it is used in the text.)

1. trace

2. realized

3. truly

**Extended Response** (Answer in complete sentences.)

1. What is the main idea of this text? Why was the text written?

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2. What are some important “firsts” that Maria Mitchell is credited with?

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3. Maria is known for speaking up for what she believed in and taking action. Several instances were explained in the story. Summarize what she felt about equal pay for women. In addition, explain her viewpoint on slavery. What action did she take?

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**Mitchell's Comet**

## Answer Sheet

Answers for Matching, Multiple-Choice Questions, Crossword, and Extended Response

### Miss Mitchell's Comet

#### Multiple-Choice Questions

1. d
2. d
3. d

#### Extended Response

1. The text was written to share about Maria Mitchell's life and what she contributed to the world of astronomy.
2. Accept any reasonable answer to include some of these firsts: She was the first woman to join the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as well as the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She was one of the first women to be elected to the American Philosophical Society.
3. Accept any reasonable answer but the student must mention that Maria felt women should get paid the same as men for the same job. She also did not agree with slavery. She would not wear any cotton clothing in honor of the slaves as usually this type of clothing was made with the cotton that the slaves picked from the fields.