

Space Visitors: Asteroids, Comets, and Meteors

Asteroids, comets, and meteors are all objects from space that sometimes come close to Earth. Asteroids are rocky bodies that mostly orbit the Sun between Mars and Jupiter. This area is called the asteroid belt. Asteroids can be large or small, and some even have their own moons.

Comets are different from asteroids. They are made of ice, dust, and gas. When a comet gets close to the Sun, the heat causes the ice to turn into gas, forming a bright tail that points away from the Sun. Comets often have long, oval orbits that take them far into space before they return.

Meteors are small bits of rock or metal that enter Earth's atmosphere. When they burn up from the heat caused by air friction, they create a bright streak of light in the sky, often called a "shooting star." If part of a meteor reaches Earth's surface, it is called a meteorite.



Comprehension Questions:

1. Where do most asteroids orbit the Sun?
2. What materials are comets mostly made of?
3. What causes a comet's tail to form?
4. What is a meteorite?
5. In what way is a meteor different from an asteroid?