

Informational Text

This selection describes a comet, which is a ball of icy particles that orbits the sun. Read the selection. Then, answer the questions. On your answer sheet, darken the circle for each correct answer for multiple-choice items. For the short-answer item, write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

Halley's Comet

Halley's Comet is expected to be visible again in the United States in the year 2062. The comet passes within sight of Earth only once about every 76 years, so most people only get to see it once in their lifetime.

Edmund Halley was an English astronomer who first saw the comet in 1682. It lit up the night sky for weeks, and many people feared that it would never disappear. Others were afraid that the comet would come down on Earth and cause the death of many people. Halley tried to tell the public that they had nothing to fear from the comet. He based his belief on his friend Isaac Newton's fairly new scientific theories on gravity. Using these theories, Halley predicted that the comet would return again in the year 1758.

As Halley predicted, the comet returned in 1758. It was Christmas night of that year. Halley died in 1742, so he couldn't verify the accuracy of his prediction. Because Halley was the person who had correctly predicted the comet's return, people started calling it "Halley's Comet."

The comet came to be called "The Flaming Sword" because of its shape and the many stories about its sighting. Some people started to blame the comet for famine, war, and disease. They thought it was an evil star and an omen of bad events.



- According to the selection, how were Newton and Halley alike?
 - They both had theories about gravity.
 - They both saw the comet reappear in 1758.
 - They were both scientists.
 - They both saw the comet twice in their lifetime.
- Which statement is supported by evidence in the selection?
 - Halley was willing to accept new ideas.
 - Halley was not good at proposing scientific theories.
 - Halley was famous during his lifetime.
 - Halley was incorrect in his prediction about the comet.
- What does the word verify mean in this selection?
 - describe
 - predict
 - confirm
 - support
- How many times do most people get to see Halley's Comet in their lifetime?
 - once
 - twice
 - ten times
 - seventy-six times
- Why was the comet named after Edmund Halley?
 - Halley told people that the comet would not fall to Earth.
 - Halley was the first person to observe the comet in 1682.
 - Halley suggested his name to replace "The Flaming Sword."
 - Halley correctly predicted the comet would appear in 1758.
- Which of these generalizations is supported in the selection?
 - Scientists in the 1600s and 1700s were not very knowledgeable.
 - People were superstitious in the 1600s and 1700s.
 - Comets cause a lot of bad events on Earth.
 - Comets appear more frequently today than they did in the past.
- What is the main idea of the selection?