

## Introduction

Download the LearnEnglish Themes podcast. You'll find more information on this page:  
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-themes.htm>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- The article that you can listen to in the podcast
- An optional language activity based on the article
- Links to other activities on the LearnEnglish website on this theme (space).

## Read the article

### The moon

*Lazy moon, come out soon. You can make me happy, if you will.*

As the brightest and biggest thing in the night sky, the moon has inspired music, poetry and stories for centuries. Federico Garcia Lorca wrote a ballad about it. Debussy composed a piece for piano. Frank Sinatra wanted someone to fly him there.

### Mythological explanations

Many peoples and civilisations have made the moon part of their beliefs. In Hinduism, it contains *soma*, a drink that gives the gods immortality. When the Maoris look at the moon, they see a woman holding a bucket who they call Rona. She controls the tides and makes rain when she is angry by pouring the water out. The Inuit think the moon chases his sister the sun across the sky. He becomes thin, like a crescent, because he forgets to eat while he is running. In parts of Europe, people believed a full moon made people mad. The word lunacy comes from the name of the Roman Goddess, Luna.

### Marking time

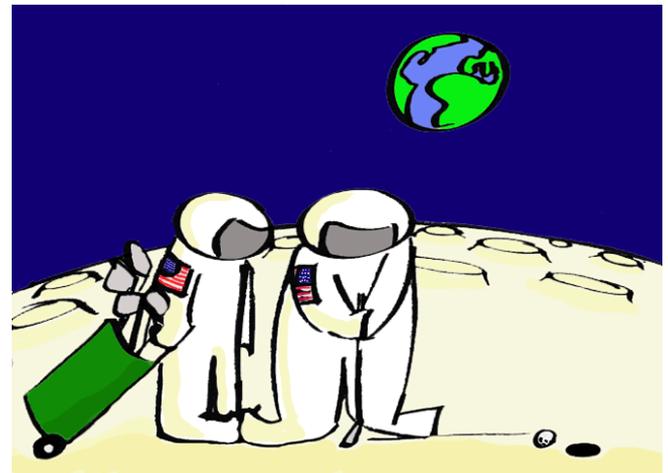
In the Muslim year, Ramadan begins when the new moon appears. Christians count fourteen days after the first full moon of the Spring Equinox and celebrate Easter on the next Sunday. The Chinese have a moon festival in autumn when people read and write poetry and eat moon cakes- small and round with sweets inside. In Thailand, people send boats down the river with candles in them under the full moon during Loy Krathong.

### Mistaken beliefs

People will tell you that crime rises and the number of suicides and traffic accidents go up on

nights when there is a full moon. No study has a found significant increase, however. Some believe the lunar cycle and the human menstrual cycle are linked, and that women are influenced by the phases of the moon. Pure coincidence. The lunar cycle is regular - every 29.5 days - while women's are slightly shorter and start at different times.

Another belief is that the pull of the moon's gravity has an influence on people like it does on the sea. However, the tides are only affected by the moon because they combine with the force of the earth as it spins. Someone estimated that a mosquito has more gravitational effect on us than the moon.



And I'm sorry to say that the Great Wall of China is not visible from the moon. But you can see it from a satellite in orbit around the earth.

### Moon landings

In July 1969, it took about seventy hours to get there by rocket. All the computing power they used then now exists inside just one personal computer!

Everyone knows that there is no air on the moon and very little gravity. But it is a hostile environment to humans in other ways. Like a desert, it gets very hot during the day (130°C) and very cold at night (minus118°C), which is why you need a space suit.

A total of twelve men have walked on the moon. Their footprints are still there because there's no wind or water to obliterate them. One astronaut, Alan Sheppard, hit a golf ball that went 800 metres because of the lack of gravity. Presumably, it's still there too.

Some people don't believe anybody has been to the moon at all. They think it was all simulated in a desert or a film studio. But then thirteen per cent of adults in the USA still believe that part of the moon is made of cheese...

### Mortal remains

Do you want to be buried on the moon? Only one person has; Eugene Merle Shoemaker, one of the original brains behind the US Space program. His ashes were put there after he died in 1997. Scientists think that the moon itself is the remains of a collision between the earth and another planet, but its exact origins are still a mystery.

## After reading

### Exercise 1

In the box are 7 numbers that are referred to in the article. Can you match the numbers to the explanations?

70	29.5	-118	800	13	1.5	1969
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Explanation
1. The temperature of the moon at night
2. The number of hours it takes to reach the moon from earth
3. The number of seconds it takes light to travel from the moon to the earth
4. The year men first walked on the moon
5. The distance in metres an astronaut hit a golf ball on the moon
6. The percentage of adults in the USA who think the moon is made of cheese
7. The number of days it takes for the moon to complete a full cycle

### More activities on this topic

You'll find links to all the following activities connected to the theme of space at:  
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-themes-space.htm>

- **Articles:** There are two more articles: **Space** and **Wormholes**.
- **Word games:** There are two word games: **Solar system riddle** and **Science fiction** gapfilling.
- **Poem: Star-gazers.** In this interesting poem William Wordsworth explores what goes through people's minds when they look at the stars through a telescope.
- **History:** There are four history articles: **Challenger explodes**, **Manned space flight**, **Moon landing** and **US-USSR space link-up**.
- **Science:** There are four cubed articles: **Asteroid explorer**, **Moon rocket**, **Smart dust**, and **Stereo sun**.
- **Trivia:** Everything you (n)ever wanted to know about space.
- There are also two space-related cartoons and some carefully selected external links.

**Answers to comprehension activity:** 1. -118; 2. 70; 3. 1.5; 4. 1969; 5. 800; 6. 13; 7. 29