

Lesson 3

THE NORTH STAR

OBJECTIVES:

\* To start looking at the night sky.

\* To teach students the cardinal points at home.

GRADES: 4 and up.

SCHEDULING:

This assignment requires a short introduction at school, and a clear night to do the homework.

PREPARATION:

Using the student sheet, find the North Star yourself.

STUDENT SHEET:

\* Finding North

INTRODUCTION:

Explain that sailors in the ocean cannot use landmarks to help them find their way. How do they find directions? One way is by using the North Star.

ACTIVITY:

Hand out the student sheet. Explain that most stars in the sky are always in motion. However, they remain in constant patterns, as shown on the illustrations. Make sure they can recognize which star is the North Star on each one. Warn them that the Big Dipper may be considerably bigger than they expect.

Also encourage them to use other methods for finding North: an approximate knowledge of North may help find the Big

Dipper.

This first star-gazing assignment may be difficult for some students. Be sure to discuss their experiences at school the next day, as early in the day as possible. If some students do not succeed, encourage them to try again, with the help of a classmate, parent or older sibling.

COMMENTS:

\* The EDMUND SKY GUIDE, by Terence Dickson and Sam Brown, is a fine introduction to the night sky, with outstanding illustrations. In particular, it uses the Big Dipper as a guide to several constellations. (Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N.J. 08007.)

### FINDING NORTH

There are many ways to find out where North is at your house or apartment building. You can ask someone who knows, or use a map.

At night, you can use the North Star. The North Star is not very bright. To find it, use the Big Dipper's pointer stars as a guide. The Big Dipper is a large group of stars that is easy to find. (See Figure 1.)

\* When you face the North Star, you are facing North. South is behind you. East is to your right. West is to your left.

\* If you face South, is East is to your left or right? What about West?

\* When standing at your front door, which direction are you facing?

\* When looking out your bedroom window, which direction are you facing?

\* Choose one other place away from school, and describe how you would stand to face North there.

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# FINDING THE NORTH STAR

