



## Satellites, Meteor Shower and Venus Dazzle Sky

### What is a meteor shower?

- A meteor shower is an event in which a number of meteors are observed to shoot across the sky.
- These meteors are caused when parts of an asteroid break off and enter the Earth's atmosphere at extremely high speeds.

**If you looked at the night sky from your window this week, you may have noticed a lot happening up there!**

This week has offered stargazers a feast for the eyes, as Venus, the Lyrid meteor shower and chains of Starlink satellites have all been lighting up the sky.

Looking to the west after dusk, Venus can be seen blazing away. It is the third brightest object in the sky, after the Sun and the Moon. Venus is also the third-smallest planet in our Solar System.

However, astronomers were then able to turn their attention to the east. This week also offered people the chance to see the beauty of the Lyrid meteor shower.

These shooting stars are named the Lyrid meteor shower because they appear to **originate** from the part of the sky between the Hercules and Lyra **constellations**.

This **annual** event only lasts a few days but "they are also known to produce bright fireballs," according to a NASA statement. She also said that, "A new moon this year will make way for good viewing of the Lyrids, leaving the sky dark."

If that wasn't enough, this week also offered night sky enthusiasts the chance to see the spectacle of the Starlink satellites.

Launched 60 at a time by the company SpaceX, their current **orbital** position means



Photo: There's been lots to see in the night sky!

that they can be seen above Britain, forming a train across the night sky. Malika Andress, of the National Space Centre, describes them as looking "like a string of bright pearls in the night sky."

The satellites will become a typical sight in the night sky as SpaceX plans to put 12 000 in orbit. They are aiming to provide Internet access across the planet.

All of these incredible sights have been made even more remarkable by happening on Earth Day and during International Dark Sky Week!

### Glossary

<b>originate</b>	Where something begins.
<b>constellations</b>	A group of stars forming a pattern in the sky.
<b>annual</b>	Happening every year.
<b>orbital</b>	The path of an object in space.

# Questions

1. Why are SpaceX launching satellites into space?

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2. Tick whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Venus is the third-smallest planet in our Solar System.		
The Lyrid meteor shower is the best meteor shower of the year.		
It is International Dark Sky Week this week.		
International Dark Sky Week is the coolest week of the year.		

3. In the paragraph beginning “The satellites will...”, find and copy a word which means the same as ‘ordinary’.

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4. How many satellites does SpaceX plan to launch into orbit?

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5. How do you think scientists that study space feel about this news?

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6. Tick the alternate headline that best summarises the story.

- Quiet Week for Stargazers
- Carry On, Carry On, Nothing to See Here
- Planets, Meteors and Satellites Light Up the Night Sky
- Planets, and Satellites Light Up the Night Sky

# Answers

1. Why are SpaceX launching satellites into space?  
**To provide Internet access across the planet.**

2. Tick whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Venus is the third-smallest planet in our Solar System.	✓	
The Lyrid meteor shower is the best meteor shower of the year.		✓
It is International Dark Sky Week this week.	✓	
International Dark Sky Week is the coolest week of the year.		✓

3. In the paragraph beginning “The satellites will...” find a word which means the same as ‘ordinary’.  
**typical**
4. How many satellites does SpaceX plan to launch into orbit?  
**12 000**
5. How do you think scientists that study space feel about this news?  
**Accept any reasonable answer related to how lots of things occurred at the same time, e.g. I think astronomers will be really excited because there are so many things to look at in the night’s sky at the moment.**
6. Tick the alternate headline that best summarises the story.
- Quiet Week for Stargazers
  - Carry On, Carry On, Nothing to See Here
  - Planets, Meteors and Satellites Light Up the Night Sky**
  - Planets and Satellites Light Up the Night Sky