

Exploring Mars

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Mars is our neighbour planet and has always fascinated humans as it has been seen as a potential abode for life. Knowledge about Mars is huge and was constructed step by step through numerous missions. It could be difficult to describe these missions, the associated technology, the results, the questions they raise, that's why an activity is proposed, that directly interests students. Their production is presented in the poster.

Step 1: The main Mars feature and the first Mars explorations using telescope are presented to students. It should be really interesting to present "Mars Canals" from Percival Lowell as it should also warn students against flawed interpretation. Moreover, this study has raised the big question about extra-terrestrial life on Mars for the first time. Using Google Mars is then a good way to show the huge knowledge we have on the planet and to introduce modern missions.

Step 2: Students have to choose and describe one of the Mars mission from ESA and NASA. They should work in pairs. Web sites from ESA and NASA are available and the teacher makes sure the main missions will be studied.

Step 3: Students have to collect different pieces of information about the mission – When? Which technology? What were the main results? What type of questions does it raise? They prepare an oral presentation in the form they want (role play, academic presentation, using a poster, PowerPoint). They also have to produce playing cards about the mission that could be put on a timeline.

Step 4: As a conclusion, the different cards concerning different missions are mixed. Groups of students receive cards and they have to put them on a timeline as fast as possible. It is also possible to play the game "timeline".