DISCOVER THE MEANING OF THE ARABIC NAMES OF THE STARS

Where do the names of stars like Betelgeuse and Altair come from?

, Haus der Astronomie

Curriculumonderwerp
Constellations, Stars

Grote idee van wetenschap

Trefwoorden
Islamic Heritage, Constellations, Stars

Leeftijdsgroep
6 - 14

Onderwijsniveau
Primary School, Middle School

Tijd
1h30

Groepsgrootte
None

Toezicht voor de veiligheid
Supervised

Kosten
Low (< ~5 EUR)

Locatie
Indoors (small, e.g. classroom)

Kernvaardigheden
Asking questions, Analysing and interpreting data, Communicating information

Type leeractiviteit
Partial enquiry

KORTE BESCHRIJVING

Following in the footsteps of the great Persian astronomer Al-Sufi, pupils are invited to match groups of stars with the corresponding Greek constellation, to learn the Arab names of the brightest stars therein and what their names mean. We still use these names today but most people know little about their meanings or how to pronounce them. The activity comes with a set of cards that contain illustrations of the constellations from both traditions. The children use them to fulfill that task.

DOELEN

The children will realise that the names of many stars originate from the Arab language and what those labels mean. They will also understand that the way how we address the night sky with its stars and constellations is a result of multicultural progress achieved many centuries ago, because the names of the stars reflect the meaning of the constellation in the Arab and Middle Eastern tradition. The activity strengthens pattern recognition skills.

LEERDOELEN

After carrying out the activity, the children will be able to:

- recognise stellar constellations by seeing groups of stars.
- repeat the meaning of the Arab names of stars inside the constellations.

EVALUATIE

- After the activity, use a few cards with Greek constellations and ask the children for the names.
- Ask the children which names of stars they remember. Involve the whole group of children in discussing their meaning.

MATERIAAL

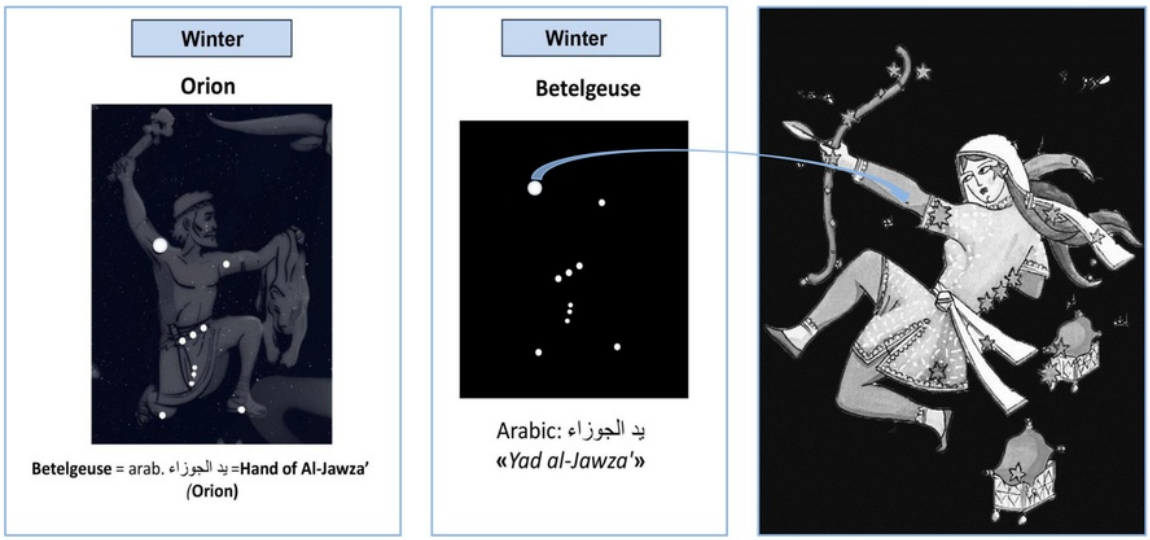
- Set of cards: "Arabic star names"

ACHTERGRONDINFORMATIE

Although other Arab star names were introduced later, those selected by Al-Sufi in his “Book of the Constellations” comprise the largest list of Arab star names that we still use today. Many of these star names are linked to the original Arab constellation of which they once formed part. For instance, “Betelgeuse” is the brightest star of the Orion constellation. It means “the Hand of Al-Jawza”, the hunting goddess which a group of Arabs used to worship and saw at the sky on the place of Orion.

VOLLEDIGE BESCHRIJVING VAN DE ACTIVITEIT

Take the cards “Arabic star names” and mix on one side the largest cards (A) containing Greek constellations and the narrow ones (B) containing only the group of stars and the pronunciations of the names below. Look for the corresponding pairs by matching the constellations with the figures (see left Orion) on it with the group of stars (“Betelgeuse card”). Just as with the previous activity spot the patterns formed by the stars.



Card game the Arabic names of the stars (image credits: Scorza)

CURRICULUM

Space Awareness curricula topics (EU and South Africa)

The journey of ideas, Constellations, Stars

CONCLUSIE

By matching groups of stars on playing cards, the pattern recognition skills of the children are strengthened. By comparing stellar groups from the ancient Greek and medieval Arab world, the children realise that those constellations contain stars whose names have Arab origin. Those names retain the meaning of the constellations in the Arabian and Persian world.

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