

gravity

the force of attraction
between two masses

greenhouse effect

the trapping of the sun's warmth in a planet's lower atmosphere, due to the greater transparency of the atmosphere to visible radiation from the sun than to infrared radiation emitted from the planet's surface

hypothesis

a proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation

nebula

a cloud of gas or small particles in outer space

protostar

a flattened cloud of gas and dust in space believed to develop into a star

quasar

a name short for quasistellar astronomical object; all have large red shifts, showing they are travelling at very high speeds

radioactivity

the emission of ionizing radiation or particles caused by the spontaneous disintegration of atomic nuclei

red shift

the lines in the spectra of galaxies move to longer wavelengths than they found when spectra are produced here on Earth

respiration

a process in living organisms involving the production of energy, typically with the intake of oxygen and the release of carbon dioxide from the oxidation of complex organic substances

seismic wave

wave motion in the Earth caused by earthquakes

solar system

the sun, together with the planets, comets and asteroids that are held by its gravity and orbit around it

spectroscopy

the production, measurement and interpretation of electromagnetic spectra from either the emissions or absorption of radiant energy

steady state theory

a theory that new matter is created as the universe is expanding outwards to keep the density of the universe constant

supernova

a star that suddenly bursts into very great brilliance as a result of it exploding

theory

a proposed explanation for a group of connected observations that has been successfully tested

uniformitarianism

the idea that the present is the key to the past; that geological processes occurring today have occurred in the same regular manner throughout geological time

wavelength

the distance between two crests (or two troughs) of a wave
