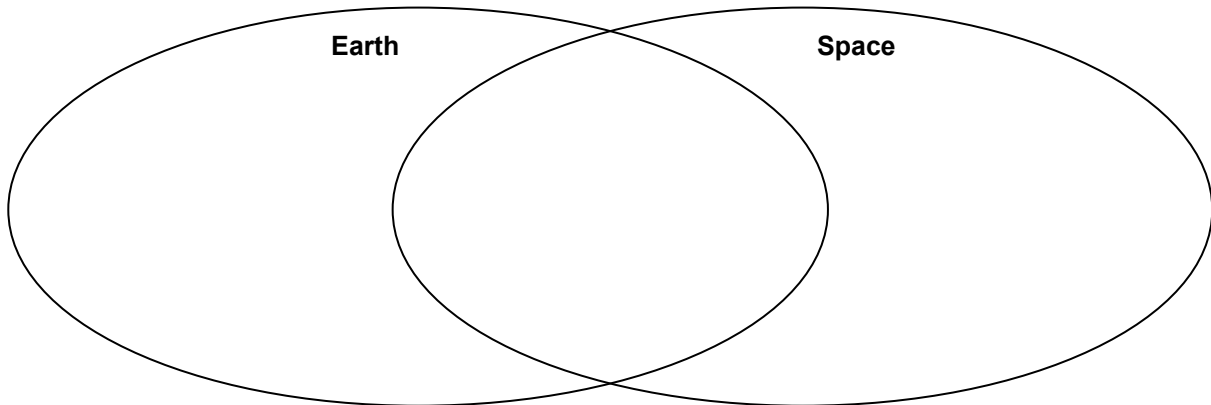


'A big responsibility': astronaut from UAE on longest ever Arab space mission

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Think about life on Earth and in space. What's the same? What's different? Fill in the Venn diagram. Discuss with a classmate.



2 Key words

- a. Write the correct words from the wordpool to match the definitions below. Then, find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

dominate emphasise engaged excitement exploration float
icon orbit pressure spacewalk vital wonder

1. a famous person or thing that people admire and see as a cultural symbol

2. the path followed by a planet or an object as it moves around another world, star, moon, etc.

3. control or have much influence over somebody/something _____
4. necessary for something to succeed or exist _____
5. a feeling of surprise and pleasure that you have when you see or experience something beautiful, unusual, or unexpected _____
6. a worried feeling which comes from dealing with a complicated situation

7. busy doing something; involved with somebody/something in an active and interested way

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8. the act of travelling through a place to find out about it or look for something in it

9. the state of feeling or showing happiness and enthusiasm _____
10. move slowly through air or water _____
11. give particular importance to something _____
12. a period that an astronaut spends in space outside a spacecraft _____

b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences. You may have to change their form.

1. The university students are under _____ to prepare for their exams.
2. The Earth's _____ around the sun takes 365 days.
3. The look of _____ on a child's face when they learn something new is unique.
4. The manager spent a lot of time _____ the new work-from-home policy in the staff meeting.
5. Teachers work hard to keep their students _____ in class.
6. Do you see all those bubbles _____ through the air?
7. Former baseball player, Jackie Robinson, is a sporting _____.
8. It's _____ to follow the instructions strictly, or you may get hurt.

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Level 2: Intermediate

Oliver Holmes

1 September, 2023

- 1 The songs of the late Egyptian icon Umm Kulthum have been played many times in taxis and coffee shops across the Arab world. Now, they have been played on the International Space Station.
- 2 Sultan al-Neyadi, who will make history after completing the longest ever Arab space mission, has told the *Guardian* from orbit that he felt a responsibility to bring a taste of Arab culture to space.
- 3 "Everybody is watching us; everybody is excited about space," Neyadi said. "I heard a lot of my colleagues say: 'It's really nice to hear a different language on the station.'"

Several hundred people have gone into space, and more than half have been Americans, with space travel dominated for decades by NASA astronauts or Russian cosmonauts. So far, there have been only six who are Arabs, now known as "najmanauts" based on the Arabic word for star, "najm".
- 4 As well as vital scientific experiments, Neyadi has used his six-month trip to the ISS, which spins around the globe at a speed of about 17,500 mph (28,000 km/h) and an altitude of roughly 250 miles (400km), to bring the wonders of space to the Arab world.

The 42-year-old flight engineer has posted regular video updates in Arabic on social media about life in the space station, from eating space food to keeping fit in a "weightless" environment.
- 5 Asked if he felt pressure as one of a handful of najmanauts to get people in the Middle East and North Africa engaged in space exploration and science, Neyadi said there is a huge audience in the Arab world "thirsty to learn more about space". At the same time, Neyadi has provided a different view for the global space-watching community, taking photographs of Middle Eastern cities and famous locations that celebrate a region often shown negatively in the West.

- 6 "Here is the beautiful and historical city of Baghdad, the cornerstone of the golden age of knowledge," Neyadi tweeted. In another image, he described Beirut as "the city that breathes art, culture and beauty", while the Suez Canal was the "heart of global trade that has brought continents closer for over 150 years".
- 7 His images have created much online excitement. "Many people were responding, and they were happy, and they were really excited to see their place being tweeted from space. And many people wanted their hometowns or countries to be shown from space. So it's amazing to engage an audience in space activity."
- 8 During his long trip, Neyadi filmed himself celebrating the Muslim Eid al-Fitr festival, playing Qur'anic prayers, and wearing a white Emirati kandura, a traditional long piece of clothing. In another video, he floats through the station to one of Umm Kulthum's songs.

"This place is called the *International* Space Station," he said, emphasising the word "international". "We have a large audience that needs to understand from both sides – an Arab astronaut living and working aboard the station, and then they learn about the culture we are from and the region."
- 9 The najmanaut, who studied at the University of Brighton and went on to join the UAE Armed Forces, has broken several records while in space, including becoming the first Arab to perform a spacewalk.
- 10 And in May, two Saudi najmanauts, Rayyanah Barnawi – the first Arab woman in space – and Ali al-Qarni, joined Neyadi for an eight-day mission. It was the first time three Arabs were in space together at the same time.
- 11 Several months later, Neyadi was preparing for his return. "The first thing I will do is have a hot shower," he said, "and the second will be to have a real cup of coffee."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. Who is Umm Kulthum?
2. Why is Sultan al-Neydai making history?
3. What did he feel a responsibility to do during the mission?
4. Which two countries have sent the most people into space?
5. What words are used for Arab, Russian, and American space travellers?
6. How many visitors to space have been Arabs?
7. At what altitude is the ISS, and how fast does it spin?
8. What has Neyadi posted in his video updates on social media?
9. Why have Neyadi's photographs created much excitement?
10. What "first" happened in May?

4 Key language

a. Complete the table with the correct form of the verbs. All the verbs are used in the article.

Present simple	Past simple	Present perfect simple
tell(s)		
		have/has been
	created	
		have/has broken

b. Complete the sentences using the present perfect simple.

1. I _____ (never / break) a promise to my best friend.
2. My mother _____ (always / tell) me to work hard and be responsible.
3. We haven't seen each other for ages. How _____ (you / be)?
4. Nayadi's space mission _____ (create) an opportunity for more Arabs to travel to space.

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Level 2: Intermediate

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "We're all humans in space."
- "The International Space Station (ISS) has become more international recently."
- "Culture is what you take with you everywhere you go."

6 In your own words

a. Do some research on the International Space Station.

- What are some of the missions about?
- What are some experiments they've done recently?
- Which one do you find the most interesting? Why?
- What are one or two things they learned?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinion. Here are some phrases to help you when you talk about facts.

According to the reports, ...

Their research showed ...

The scientists learned ...

The mission was about ...

They still need to learn more about ...

Here are some phrases to use when giving your opinion.

I think (that) ...

I want to know more about ...

From my perspective, ...

In my understanding/opinion, ...

I (still) have questions about ...