

词汇: *space exploration* 太空探索

It sounds like something from the realms of **science fiction** – a **space expedition** into the **vast expanse** of space, heading towards **the Red Planet**. While we're not quite ready to put a person on **terra firma**, the question we ask today is: why are so many countries interested in going to Mars?

The **space race** saw the USA and USSR compete to achieve firsts in **spaceflight**. The Soviet Union released Sputnik 1, an **artificial satellite**, before anyone else, and the US landed on the Moon first. Now it appears that Mars is the **celestial body** of desire. While the kudos and bragging rights to be the first nation to **touchdown** is an obvious draw, there are other reasons we want to get there.

One of these could be the survival of our **species**. You only have to look at the fossilised remains of the dinosaurs to see the benefit of finding another **habitable** planet. While Mars doesn't have the right conditions to call it home just yet, there's always the concept of **terraforming** – changing the environment of a planet to suit our needs.

However, not everyone agrees. Leading **astrophysicist** Neil deGrasse Tyson has said the concept of altering **habitability** of another planet because of the damage we have done to **Earth** makes no sense when we can simply terraform Earth.

It seems the main reason at the moment is the search for **extraterrestrial** life. It has long been believed that, at one time, Mars was abundant with life. Now seemingly dead, the potential fossils could answer questions about our own evolution and that of our planet. One theory is that **bacterial life** on our planet didn't start here, but was transferred via **asteroid** from Mars.

One benefit championed by scientists like Neil deGrasse Tyson is that landing on Mars may inspire more people to become interested in science and **astronomy**. Surely inspiring a new generation to visit the stars is reason enough.

词汇表

science fiction	科幻小说
space expedition	宇宙探险
vast expanse	广阔的区域
the Red Planet	火星
terra firma	陆地
space race	太空竞赛
spaceflight	宇宙飞行
artificial satellite	人造卫星
celestial body	天体
touchdown	着陆
species	物种
habitable	适于居住的
terraforming	(外星环境) 地球化
astrophysicist	天体物理学家
habitability	可居住性
Earth	地球
extraterrestrial	地球外的
bacterial life	细菌生命体
asteroid	小行星
astronomy	天文学

测验与练习

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. Which two countries were involved in the space race?
2. What was the purpose of the space race?
3. Why does Neil deGrasse Tyson think terraforming Mars makes no sense?
4. Where do some people think bacterial life on Earth originated?
5. What benefit of heading to Mars does Neil deGrasse Tyson support?

2. 选择意思恰当的单词或词组来完成下列句子。

1. Planets like Mars need to be _____ before they are habitable.

terraform	terraformed	terraforms	terraforming
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2. The _____ saw nations trying to achieve firsts in spaceflight.

space race	asteroid	Red Planet	astronomy
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3. I'm studying to be an _____ at university.

astronomy	asteroid	terra firma	astrophysicist
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4. We have _____. We have landed on the planet's surface!

extraterrestrial	touchdown	celestial body	asteroid
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5. Mars is an example of a _____.

celestial body	astronomy	space race	asteroid
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答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. Which two countries were involved in the space race?

The USA and the USSR (sometimes known as the Soviet Union).

2. What was the purpose of the space race?

The purpose was to achieve firsts in spaceflight.

3. Why does Neil deGrasse Tyson think terraforming Mars makes no sense?

Because we would probably want to terraform Earth instead.

4. Where do some people think bacterial life on Earth originated?

Some people believe bacterial life began on Mars and arrived via asteroid.

5. What benefit of heading to Mars does Neil deGrasse Tyson support?

The benefit of inspiring a new generation to be interested in the stars.

2. 选择意思恰当的单词或词组来完成下列句子。

1. Planets like Mars need to be **terraformed** before they are habitable.

2. The **space race** saw nations trying to achieve firsts in spaceflight.

3. I'm studying to be an **astrophysicist** at university.

4. We have **touchdown**. We have landed on the planet's surface!

5. Mars is an example of a **celestial body**.