



READING PASSAGE · LEVEL 2 · ON-GRADE

# JUPITER: KING OF THE PLANETS

A reading passage for middle-grade students (Ages 8–10)

Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system — so large that it could swallow more than 1,300 Earths. It is the fifth planet from the Sun, and is part of a group called the gas giants. Unlike rocky planets such as Mars or Earth, Jupiter has no solid surface. Travel deep into Jupiter and you would pass through ever-thicker layers of hydrogen and helium gas before reaching a small rocky core at the centre.

The most famous feature of Jupiter is the Great Red Spot — a huge spinning storm bigger than Earth that has been raging for at least 350 years. Astronomers first noticed it in the 1600s and it has been there ever since, though in recent years it has been slowly shrinking.

Jupiter's atmosphere is striped with bands of swirling colourful clouds. The bands move in opposite directions and are caused by winds that can blow at over 600 km/h.

Jupiter has the most moons of any planet — at least 101 confirmed at last count, with more being discovered all the time. The four biggest, called the Galilean moons, were first seen by Galileo Galilei in 1610 using one of the earliest telescopes. Their names are Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto.

Ganymede, Jupiter's largest moon, is also the largest moon in the entire solar system — even bigger than the planet Mercury!

## ★ WORDS TO KNOW 4 TERMS

### gas giant

A huge planet made mostly of gas, with no solid surface.

### telescope

A tube with lenses that makes far-away things look closer.

### atmosphere

The layer of gases around a planet.

### moon

A natural object that orbits a planet.

## ★ COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS 5 QUESTIONS

1. Why is Jupiter called a "gas giant"?

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2. What would you find at the very centre of Jupiter?

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3. What is the Great Red Spot, and how is it changing?

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4. What causes the colourful bands in Jupiter's atmosphere?

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5. What is so special about Ganymede?

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