



READING PASSAGE · LEVEL 2 · ON-GRADE

SATURN: LORD OF THE RINGS

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

Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun and is famous for its bright, beautiful ring system. While other planets — Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune — also have rings, none are as wide or as easy to see as Saturn's. Through even a small telescope, Saturn's rings are clearly visible from Earth.

The rings are made of countless billions of pieces of water ice and rock, ranging in size from tiny grains to huge chunks as large as houses. Although the rings are over 280,000 kilometres across, they are surprisingly thin — only about 10 to 30 metres deep on average.

Saturn itself is a gas giant, similar in composition to Jupiter. It is mostly hydrogen and helium, with no solid surface. It is also the least dense planet in the solar system — its density is less than water — meaning that, if there were an ocean big enough, Saturn would float.

Saturn has the most moons of any planet — 292 confirmed at last count. The biggest, Titan, is the only moon in the solar system with a thick atmosphere. Titan even has lakes and rivers — but instead of water, they are filled with liquid methane and ethane.

Another moon, Enceladus, shoots out plumes of water from its icy crust, suggesting it has a hidden ocean below.

★ WORDS TO KNOW 4 TERMS

ring system

A set of rings around a planet, usually made of ice and rock.

density

How much matter is packed into a given amount of space.

helium

A very light gas — the same one used in party balloons.

methane

A gas — the same one used as fuel in stoves.

★ COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS 5 QUESTIONS

1. How are Saturn's rings different from the rings of other planets?

2. What are Saturn's rings made of, and how big are the pieces?

3. Why would Saturn float in a giant ocean?

4. What is unusual about Titan compared to other moons in our solar system?

5. What does Enceladus do that suggests it might have a hidden ocean?
