

The birth of a star

Henry is an astronomer. He is very excited because he thinks he might have discovered the beginning of a new star. But then he gets even more exciting news ... he's going to be a father!

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

- a cloud
- an astronomer
- a nebula
- distant
- nappies
- an ultrasound scan
- pushchair
- a telescope

Definition

- a person who studies stars
- a large amount of gas
- underpants for babies
- a cloud of gas in space
- a chair with wheels for moving a baby around
- something you use to see a long way
- an image of the inside of your body
- far away

The birth of a star

5 June 2006

Henry looks carefully into the telescope which lets him see far, far away, as far away as the distant nebulae on the far edges of the Milky Way. Henry is an astronomer. He looks at the sky, and at stars in particular. Even though he spends much of his time looking at detailed computer reports, which are just lists and lists of numbers, his favourite thing about his job is looking through the telescope. And today he is very excited. He isn't sure yet, but he thinks he has seen a dense cloud which might be the beginning of a new star.

5 July 2006

Henry is still looking for a tiny point of light in the sky. He checks the lists and lists of numbers that his computer produces, and tries to make sense of them. He tries to turn the basic data into an image, a picture of the star he hopes to see, but it is not yet possible.

He arrives home feeling tired. His wife Anna sits down next to him. 'I've got some news ...,' she says.

5 August 2006

Henry is so excited about being a father that he has forgotten about his star. Anna is feeling sick and tired. Henry is no longer thinking about nebulae and clouds and gases. He is thinking about pushchairs and nappies.

5 September 2006

Anna and Henry go to the doctor. Anna has an ultrasound scan. Henry is used to seeing distant images of planets and stars and clouds, and now he looks at this image. It almost looks like a cloud, but it is much clearer. He can see the outline of a head, the features of a face. And he realises that this means much more to him than the distant stars he is used to looking at.

5 October 2006

Anna finally starts to get fatter. Henry is feeling terrified. For the first time now, he realises exactly what it means. In a few months' time, he will be a father.

5 November 2006

Anna looks at her tummy and now starts to feel that there is another living person inside her. She thinks about Henry's job, and remembers how excited Henry was a few months ago when he thought that he could see a new star.

5 December 2006

Henry thinks that Anna looks a bit like a whale, but that she is very beautiful anyway. He thinks that next Christmas everything will be very, very different.

5 January 2007

Anna feels like she wants to sleep all the time. She feels like the baby already wants to come out. The baby is kicking her from inside. She feels like a football. She can't wait to become a mother. Henry calls her ten times a day on her mobile phone.

5 February 2007

It can take as long as ten million years for a star to form, but Henry doesn't care about seeing his star any more. He knows that although he may be the first person to see a new star, it is impossible for him to see the birth of a star, from its beginning to its appearance. But he doesn't care, because a new star has just entered his life.

'But we haven't thought of a name!' says Anna, holding the tiny baby in her arms.

'I have,' says Henry. 'I've got a beautiful name for her.'

'What is it?'

'Stella. Let's call her Stella.'

Chris Rose

Tasks

Task 1

Write a number (1–8) to put the story events in the order they happen.

- Anna gives Henry some news.
- They see an image of the baby for the first time.
- Henry thinks he sees the beginning of a new star.
- Henry feels really worried about his new responsibilities.
- Henry changes what he usually thinks about.
- They decide on a name for the baby.
- The baby moves inside Anna.
- The baby is born.

Task 2

The baby and the star are similar in some ways, but different in others. Write the sentences in the correct group.

They are very young.	They make Henry emotional.
Henry uses technology to look at them.	They are important to Henry at the end of the story.
The baby's name means 'star'.	They take nine months to be born.

Similarities between the baby and the star	Differences

Discussion

Have you experienced anything like Henry and Anna?

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. a
3. d
4. h
5. c
6. g
7. e
8. f

Task 1

1. Henry thinks he sees the beginning of a new star.
2. Anna gives Henry some news.
3. Henry changes what he usually thinks about.
4. They see an image of the baby for the first time.
5. Henry feels really worried about his new responsibilities.
6. The baby moves inside Anna.
7. The baby is born.
8. They decide on a name for the baby.

Task 2

Similarities between the baby and the star

1. They are very young.
2. They make Henry emotional.
3. Henry uses technology to look at them.
4. The baby's name means 'star'.

Differences

5. They are important to Henry at the end of the story.
6. They take nine months to be born.