

Pluto's Identity Crisis

A Great Story Parable

(long version; kids can act this)

By Connie Barlow & Bella Downey

www.TheGreatStory.org/Pluto.html

Script for full classroom participation

Revised August 2010

This script is meant to be acted out by elementary or middle school children in classrooms in which **at least 3 or 4 children are excellent readers.**

The whole classroom participates in the parts of the play where the "audience" is asked to call out the name of the next planet. So there are **8 places where the entire class participates.** It is important to encourage the kids in the audience to all call out their answer, rather than just selecting someone who raises a hand. That way **everybody can stay engaged in the play,** feeling like they are participating even though they are just watching. Also, there will be **8 times when you will ask for a volunteer from the audience to come forward to play the role of a particular planet,** which requires reading just one short statement. Immediately afterward, that volunteer returns to their seat. So the whole class stays **hopeful** (until the last planet, Mercury, is chosen) that they **might get to play the role of a planet.** Those roles are *not* determined in advance. Read your TEACHER script carefully ahead of time to see how this is to be handled.

Select **very good readers with strong voices** to play the roles of the two main characters, who are on-stage for the entire play: **Pluto** and **Icy Comet.** (If any of the main characters begin to recite in too quiet a voice, break in and encourage them to speak louder.) You will need another excellent reader to play the **Sun,** whose role begins only near the end of the play. **If there is a 4th strong reader** in your classroom, invite them to play the role of **Narrator.** Otherwise, use your Teacher Script **and read the Narrator parts yourself.** Note: If you don't have enough strong readers in your classroom, **invite some older students** to play those roles. You can assure them that *no advance preparation is required.* **Nobody needs to read their script ahead of time** (except the Sun will have a chance to sit at the back or side of the class and do that, because their character doesn't enter the play until the very end).

PROPS: No props are required, but it is highly recommended to purchase in advance fabric (quarter-to-half yard in width) that can serve as **colorful scarves** to drape around the necks of the main characters (and also the planets, if you have the budget to purchase more). No scarf for Narrator. Pluto: dark purple. Icy Comet: White or with silver accents. Sun: yellow. Neptune: turquoise. Uranus: gray or beige. Saturn: silver. Jupiter: pattern of splotchy brown, white, and orange. Mars: red. Earth: grass-green. Venus: white or gray. Mercury: orange.

NOTE: This parable is intended to be an excellent way to teach about **the science of why Pluto, in 2006, was deleted as a "planet" and instead was named a "dwarf planet"**. It is also a great way to teach about **adoption** in a very positive way. But do not tell anyone those facts until the play is over, if at all.

“Pluto Parable”: **TEACHER/FACILITATOR**

ADVANCE PREPARATION: *Break apart the pages in this document and staple them into 5 scripts:*

TEACHER	pp. 3 – 11
NARRATOR:	pp. 12 – 19
PLUTO:	pp. 20 – 28
ICY COMET:	pp. 29 – 37
SUN:	pp. 38 – 41
8 PLANETS:	pp. 42 – 43 <i>Cut the planet scripts into strips.</i>

RECRUITING EXCELLENT READERS: *Your version of the script has the entire play in it, with **both your and the Narrator’s roles highlighted in bold**. Thus you yourself can choose to play only the role of TEACHER or you can also play the role of NARRATOR at the same time. It is highly recommended that you find a very strong reader, other than yourself, to play the role of NARRATOR. Keep in mind that **if your own class is short of strong readers, you can recruit in advance older students to play any of the main roles:** NARRATOR, PLUTO, ICY COMET, and SUN. If any of these roles is played by a reader who is slow or too shy to speak loudly, the rest of the class might get bored.*

TEACHER LOCATION/ACTION: *Occupy a chair in the front row of the audience, along one side. When Pluto and Icy Comet begin their journey to visit the planets one by one, you will need to come forward 8 times and do as your script tells you. Make sure you have a pouch or something to carry the slips of Planet Scripts in, while you are carrying your own full script. NOTE: It is okay if kids who are very poor readers volunteer to read any of the the Planet scripts. Always stand alongside the volunteer as they begin to read, so that you can **whisper words** or phrases into their ear if they stumble. Then, as soon as they finish their statement and Icy Comet says, “Thank you,” guide them quietly back to their seat. Check your script right away, as almost immediately you will be recruiting the next planet.*

If your class is very small: *Ask a lower-grade-level teacher if their students can be your audience.*

TEACHER/FACILITATOR script

TEACHER: *Keep the 8 Planet Scripts accessible in a pocket or folder.*

NARRATOR: "Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets love to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs. Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Space Rock!"

PLUTO: "Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I'm a Planet. My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System."

COMET: "That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star."

PLUTO: "The Sun not my parent star? You are wrong! The Sun is my Mother-Father!"

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet said nothing."

PLUTO: "Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. The other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of a vast pond. Yet I cross through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, your path through the Solar System is so strange that you sometimes cross over to the inside of Neptune's orbit."

When that happens, you are closer to the Sun than Neptune is."

PLUTO: "I thought I was the only one who knew about that! You won't tell on me, will you?"

COMET: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet is sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly, Icy Comet has an idea."

COMET: "Hey! I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravity for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the Solar System. Along the way, you may be able to learn more about who you are."

NARRATOR: "Pluto is happy to comply. As soon as the gravity is turned down, Icy Comet curves a long icy tail around Pluto. Thus begins Pluto's journey toward the very center of the Solar System, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet will meet and greet the other planets."

TEACHER: *Ask the kids who are watching the play (and encourage them to **all call out** rather than raising hands), "So what is the first planet that Pluto and Icy Comet will meet on their journey into the Solar System? . . ."* [Neptune] **"Who wants to play the part of Neptune?"** [*Choose a volunteer and hand the Neptune script to the volunteer and position them on-stage.*]

COMET: "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

NEPTUNE: "Whenever I look toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets. They look like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *QUIETLY assist Neptune in returning to his/her seat, because Pluto will start talking while you are doing it.*

PLUTO: "Hmmm. Neptune sees the other planets like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. But that is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: *Ask the kids who are watching the play, "So what is the next planet that Pluto and Icy Comet will meet on their journey into the Solar System? . . ." [Uranus] "Who wants to play the part of Uranus?" [Hand the Uranus script to the volunteer and position them on-stage.]*

COMET: "Ho there, Uranus. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: "Thank you, Uranus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Uranus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Hmmm. I am small and so I don't have enough gravity to hold even a thin atmosphere in place — and certainly not thick clouds. I wonder if that means I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. With each encounter, Pluto feels less and less like a planet."

TEACHER: *Ask the kids, "So what is the next planet that Pluto and Icy Comet will meet on their journey into the Solar System? " [Saturn] "Who wants to play the part of Saturn?" [Hand the Saturn script to the volunteer and position them on-stage.]*

COMET: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is an easy question! Look at how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Saturn. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Saturn in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

NARRATOR: **The journey continues. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands now looms ahead.**

TEACHER: *Ask the kids, "So what is the next planet that Pluto and Icy Comet will meet on their journey into the Solar System? . . ."* [Jupiter] **"Who wants to play the part of Jupiter?"** *[Jupiter script to the volunteer; position them on-stage.]*

COMET: "Ho there, Jupiter! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

JUPITER: "I know I am a planet because I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: "Thank you, Jupiter. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Jupiter in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: **"The journey continues. Something red is now coming into view."**

TEACHER: "So what is the next planet that Pluto and Icy Comet will meet? . . ." [Mars] "Who wants to play the part of Mars?" [*Script to volunteer; onto stage.*]

COMET: "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet because my surface looks red. I have been told that in another 5 billion years our Sun will also turn red. It will become a Red Giant. So that is how I know I am a true planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Mars. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mars in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I'm not red now, and I don't think I'll ever turn red."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. A blue-and-white pearl of a planet is now coming into view. It has patches of color like no other planet. It has patches of brilliant green."

TEACHER: "So what is this next planet? . . ." [Earth] "Who wants to play the part of Earth?" [*Script to volunteer; onto stage.*]

COMET: "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "I know I am a planet because I have green plants. Plants are green because they have chlorophyll molecules that can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. That is how I know that I am a planet!"

COMET: "Thank you, Earth. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Earth in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants!"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: "What is the next planet? . . ." [Venus] "Who wants to play the part of Venus?" [*Script to volunteer; onto stage.*]

COMET: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "Just look at me! I wear a veil of beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Venus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Venus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds. I don't have any clouds at all."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. The two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet is beginning to worry about melting if they linger long this close to the Sun."

COMET: "Whew, it is hot! Only one more planet to go! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer Solar System!"

TEACHER: "What is the final planet? . . ." [Mercury] "Who wants to play the part of Mercury?" [*Script to volunteer; onto stage.*]

COMET: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."

COMET: "Thank you, Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mercury in returning to his/her seat. **Make sure the Sun is getting ready to act . . .** Your role is over; sit down, stop reading, and enjoy the rest of the play!*

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

NARRATOR: *[Wait for Mercury to sit down and everyone is quiet. Tell audience to "Shhhhhhhhhhh!" if you need to. Then speak:]* **"At last the journey has come to an end. Icy Comet turns sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two head back toward the cool relief of the outer Solar System. But now Pluto cries out in despair. . ."**

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended. I am quite sure that I am not a planet!"

NARRATOR: *[Pause while Pluto cries for a few seconds.]* **"There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . ."**

SUN: *[Stretch out arm toward Pluto/Comet in HALT gesture.]*

NARRATOR: **"All of a sudden their journey comes to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move — not even an inch. Something was holding them back. . ."**

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet.*"

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but YOU are."

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round. But a dwarf planet is too small to clear its own path of asteroids and little space rocks. So your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."

PLUTO: (sadly) "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Dear Pluto, you are one of my very special dwarf planets, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet friend shares, too."

COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you — my darling, sweet Comet! What you and Pluto both share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. It is my love for you, in the form of gravity, that holds all of you in your orbits!"

PLUTO and COMET: (*look at one another and jump for joy!*).

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, I adopted you. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily return to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly falls asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets often do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . .

Many years pass after that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

NARRATOR: "The end!"

TEACHER: *Encourage applause.*

“Pluto Parable”: **NARRATOR**

NOTE TO NARRATOR: *Your part appears in **bold** for you to read. When you see a long stretch ahead with no bold for you to say, move off toward the side of the stage. Return to center when your time to speak nears.*

NARRATOR: *[the play begins with you reading below:]*

NARRATOR: “Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets love to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs. Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture.”

PLUTO: “Ho there, Comet!”

COMET: “Ho there, Space Rock!”

PLUTO: “Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I’m a Planet. My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System.”

COMET: “That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star.”

PLUTO: “The Sun not my parent star? You are wrong! The Sun is my Mother-Father!”

NARRATOR: “Icy Comet said nothing.”

PLUTO: “Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. The other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of

a vast pond. Yet I cross through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, your path through the Solar System is so strange that you sometimes cross over to the inside of Neptune's orbit. When that happens, you are closer to the Sun than Neptune is."

PLUTO: "I thought I was the only one who knew about that! You won't tell on me, will you?"

COMET: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet is sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly, Icy Comet has an idea."

COMET: "Hey! I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravity for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the Solar System. Along the way, you may be able to learn more about who you are."

NARRATOR: "Pluto is happy to comply. As soon as the gravity is turned down, Icy Comet curves a long icy tail around Pluto. Thus begins Pluto's journey toward the very center of the Solar System, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet will meet and greet the other planets."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Neptune.*

COMET: "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

NEPTUNE: "Whenever I look toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets. They look like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Neptune in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Hmmm. Neptune sees the other planets like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. But that is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Uranus.*

COMET: "Ho there, Uranus. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: "Thank you, Uranus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Uranus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Hmmm. I am small and so I don't have enough gravity to hold even a thin atmosphere in place — and certainly not thick clouds. I wonder if that means I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. With each encounter, Pluto feels less and less like a planet."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Saturn.*

COMET: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is an easy question! Look at how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Saturn. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Saturn in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

NARRATOR: The journey continues. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands now looms ahead.

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Jupiter.*

COMET: "Ho there, Jupiter! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

JUPITER: "I know I am a planet because I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: "Thank you, Jupiter. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Jupiter in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. Something red is now coming into view."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Mars.*

COMET: "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet because my surface looks red. I have been told that in another 5 billion years our Sun will also turn red. It will become a Red Giant. So that is how I know I am a true planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Mars. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mars in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I'm not red now, and I don't think I'll ever turn red."

NARRATOR: **"The journey continues. A blue-and-white pearl of a planet is now coming into view. It has patches of color like no other planet. It has patches of brilliant green."**

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Earth.*

COMET: "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "I know I am a planet because I have green plants. Plants are green because they have chlorophyll molecules that can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. That is how I know that I am a planet!"

COMET: "Thank you, Earth. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Earth in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants!"

NARRATOR: **"The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."**

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Venus.*

COMET: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "Just look at me! I wear a veil of beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Venus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Venus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds. I don't have any clouds at all."

NARRATOR: **"The journey continues. The two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet is beginning to worry about melting if they linger long this close to the Sun."**

COMET: "Whew, it is hot! Only one more planet to go! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer Solar System!"

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Mercury.*

COMET: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."

COMET: "Thank you, Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mercury in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

NARRATOR: *[Wait for Mercury to sit down and everyone is quiet. You may need to tell audience to "Shhhhhhhhh!" Then speak:]* **"At last the journey has come to an end. Icy Comet turns sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two head back toward the cool relief of the outer Solar System. But now Pluto cries out in despair. . ."**

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended. I am quite sure that I am not a planet!"

NARRATOR: *[Pluto will start to cry. After a few seconds, start speaking.]*

“There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . .”

SUN: *[Stretch out arm toward Pluto/Comet in HALT gesture.]*

NARRATOR: *[Wait for Sun to stretch out arm.]* **“All of a sudden their journey comes to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move — not even an inch. Something was holding them back. . .”**

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but YOU are."

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round. But a dwarf planet is too small to clear its own path of asteroids and little space rocks. So your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."

PLUTO: (sadly) "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Dear Pluto, you are one of my very special dwarf planets, and I love

you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet friend shares, too."

COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you — my darling, sweet Comet! What you and Pluto both share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. It is my love for you, in the form of gravity, that holds all of you in your orbits!"

PLUTO and COMET: (*look at one another and jump for joy!*).

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, I adopted you. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily return to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly falls asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets often do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . ."

Many years pass after that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

NARRATOR: "The end!"

"Pluto Parable": **Pluto**

*Your part appears in **bold** for you to read. You will be on-stage the entire play. It is okay to make mistakes. Just have fun! Please speak loudly, so that everyone can hear you. After Mercury finishes talking, listen carefully to Narrator because you will need to act out what Narrator says you do.*

NARRATOR: "Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets love to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs. Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Space Rock!"

PLUTO: "Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I'm a Planet. My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System."

COMET: "That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star."

PLUTO: [*angrily*] "The Sun not my parent star? You are wrong! The Sun is my Mother-Father!"

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet said nothing."

PLUTO: "Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. The other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of a vast pond. Yet I cross through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, your path through the Solar System is so strange that you sometimes cross over to the inside of Neptune's orbit. When that happens, you are closer to the Sun than Neptune is."

PLUTO: "I thought I was the only one who knew about that! [starts to cry] You won't tell on me, will you?"

COMET: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet is sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly, Icy Comet has an idea."

COMET: "Hey! I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravity for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the Solar System. Along the way, you may be able to learn more about who you are."

NARRATOR: "Pluto is happy to comply. As soon as the gravity is turned down, Icy Comet curves a long icy tail around Pluto. Thus begins Pluto's journey toward the very center of the Solar System, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet will meet and greet the other planets."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Neptune.*

COMET: "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

NEPTUNE: "Whenever I look toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets. They look like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Neptune in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Neptune is moving off-stage.]* "Hmmm. Neptune sees the other planets like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. But that is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard." *[look sad]*

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Uranus.*

COMET: "Ho there, Uranus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: "Thank you, Uranus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Uranus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Uranus is moving off-stage.]* "Hmmm. I am small and so I don't have enough gravity to hold even a thin atmosphere in place — and certainly not thick clouds. I wonder if that means I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. With each encounter, Pluto feels less and less like a planet."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Saturn.*

COMET: "Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

SATURN: "Oh, that is an easy question! Look at how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Saturn. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Saturn in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Saturn is moving off-stage.]* **"I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."**

NARRATOR: The journey continues. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands now looms ahead.

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Jupiter.*

COMET: "Ho there, Jupiter! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

JUPITER: "I know I am a planet because I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: "Thank you, Jupiter. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Jupiter in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Jupiter is moving off-stage.]* **"Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"**

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. Something red is now coming into view."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Mars.*

COMET: "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet because my surface looks red. I have been told that in another 5 billion years our Sun will also turn red. It will become

a Red Giant. So that is how I know I am a true planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Mars. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mars in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Mars is moving off-stage.]*
"I'm not red now, and I don't think I'll ever turn red."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. A blue-and-white pearl of a planet is now coming into view. It has patches of color like no other planet. It has patches of brilliant green."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Earth.*

COMET: "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "I know I am a planet because I have green plants. Plants are green because they have chlorophyll molecules that can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. That is how I know that I am a planet!"

COMET: "Thank you, Earth. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Earth in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Earth is moving off-stage.]*
"Oh no! I don't have any green plants!"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Venus.*

COMET: "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a

planet."

VENUS: "Just look at me! I wear a veil of beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Venus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Venus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: *[Start talking directly to audience while Venus is moving off-stage.]*

"I don't have bright shining clouds. I don't have any clouds at all."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. The two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet is beginning to worry about melting if they linger long this close to the Sun."

COMET: "Whew, it is hot! Only one more planet to go! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer Solar System!"

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Mercury.*

COMET: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."

COMET: "Thank you, Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mercury in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

NARRATOR: *[Wait for Mercury to sit down and everyone is quiet. Then speak:]* "At last the journey has come to an end. Icy Comet turns sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two head back toward the cool relief of the outer Solar System. But now Pluto cries out in despair. . ."

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended. I am quite sure that I am not a planet!" *[start to cry; then do what narrator says]*

NARRATOR: "There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . ."

SUN: *[stretches out arm in gesture of "HALT!"]*

NARRATOR: "All of a sudden their journey comes to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move — not even an inch. Something was holding them back. . ."

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but YOU are."

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round. But a dwarf planet is too small to clear its own path of asteroids and little space rocks. So your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."

PLUTO: *[sadly]* "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Dear Pluto, you are one of my very special dwarf planets, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet friend shares, too."

COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you — my darling, sweet Comet! What you and Pluto both share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. It is my love for you, in the form of gravity, that holds all of you in your orbits!"

PLUTO and **COMET:** *[look at one another and jump for joy!]*

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, I adopted you. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

PLUTO and **COMET:** *[Together move slowly back to the outer Solar System. Do as narrator says; you have one final line to speak (on next page).]*

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily return to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly falls asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets often do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . .

Many years pass after that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing

how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

NARRATOR: "The end!"

"Pluto Parable": **Icy Comet**

*Your part appears in **bold** for you to read. You will be on-stage the entire play. It is okay to make mistakes. Just have fun! Please speak loudly, so that everyone can hear you. After Mercury finishes talking, listen carefully to Narrator because you will need to act out what Narrator says you do.*

NARRATOR: "Once upon a time, not long ago, the nine planets were all playing in their orbits around the Sun, as planets love to do. Jupiter was stirring its Great Red Spot. Venus and Uranus were playing peek-a-boo through thick clouds. Mars was kicking up a storm of red dust, and Saturn was smoothing its rings. Our own lovely Earth, of course, was playing with dinosaurs. Just then, a comet made of ice approached Pluto. Icy Comet was doing exactly what comets like to do: testing how close it might fly by a stranger without risking capture."

PLUTO: "Ho there, Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Space Rock!"

PLUTO: "Hey! I am not a Space Rock. I'm a Planet. My name is Pluto, and I am the ninth planet of our Solar System."

COMET: "That may be what *you* think, but I can tell from the slant of your orbit that you are not like the others. You are different. And I have heard that the Sun is not your parent star."

PLUTO: "The Sun not my parent star? You are wrong! The Sun is my Mother-Father!"

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet said nothing."

PLUTO: "Well, I do sometimes wonder why my orbit is different from the rest. The other planets glide around the Sun, as if skating on the surface of a vast pond. Yet I cross through that surface at an angle, sometimes above the other planets and sometimes below."

COMET: "And unlike the others, your path through the Solar System is so strange that you sometimes cross over to the inside of Neptune's orbit. When that happens, you are closer to the Sun than Neptune is."

PLUTO: "I thought I was the only one who knew about that! You won't tell on me, will you?"

COMET: "No, I won't tell. And, hey, I'm sorry I said anything. You know, I might be wrong."

NARRATOR: "Icy Comet is sad for having made Pluto feel bad. But suddenly, Icy Comet has an idea."

COMET: "Hey! I have an idea. If you will turn down your gravity for awhile, I will invite you to join me on my journey into the Solar System. Along the way, you may be able to learn more about who you are."

NARRATOR: "Pluto is happy to comply. As soon as the gravity is turned down, Icy Comet curves a long icy tail around Pluto. Thus begins Pluto's journey toward the very center of the Solar System, in the company of a comet. One by one, Pluto and Icy Comet will meet and greet the other planets."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Neptune.*

COMET: *[wait for Neptune to be onstage]* "Ho there, Neptune. Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

NEPTUNE: "Whenever I look toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets. They look like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

COMET: "Thank you, Neptune. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Neptune in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Hmmm. Neptune sees the other planets like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. But that is not how I see the other planets. I see them through my slanted orbit. They look like snowflakes swirling in a blizzard."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Uranus.*

COMET: *[wait for Uranus to be onstage]* **"Ho there, Uranus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."**

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

COMET: **"Thank you, Uranus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."**

TEACHER: *Assist Uranus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Hmmm. I am small and so I don't have enough gravity to hold even a thin atmosphere in place — and certainly not thick clouds. I wonder if that means I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. With each encounter, Pluto feels less and less like a planet."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Saturn.*

COMET: *[wait for Saturn to be onstage]* **"Ho there, Saturn! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."**

SATURN: "Oh, that is an easy question! Look at how beautifully the light of

Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold!
That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

**COMET: "Thank you, Saturn. You have answered our question.
Goodbye."**

TEACHER: *Assist Saturn in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I do not have rings. I do not have anything that glistens silver and gold."

NARRATOR: The journey continues. An enormous planet with orange and brown bands now looms ahead.

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Jupiter.*

COMET: *[wait for Jupiter to be onstage]* "Ho there, Jupiter! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

JUPITER: "I know I am a planet because I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun."

**COMET: "Thank you, Jupiter. You have answered our question.
Goodbye."**

TEACHER: *Assist Jupiter in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Oh no! I am not big. Does that mean I am not a planet?"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. Something red is now coming into view."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Mars.*

COMET: *[wait for Mars to be onstage]* "Ho there, Mars! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

MARS: "I know I am a planet because my surface looks red. I have been told that in another 5 billion years our Sun will also turn red. It will become a Red Giant. So that is how I know I am a true planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Mars. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mars in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I'm not red now, and I don't think I'll ever turn red."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. A blue-and-white pearl of a planet is now coming into view. It has patches of color like no other planet. It has patches of brilliant green."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Earth.*

COMET: *[wait for Earth to be onstage]* "Ho there, Earth! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

EARTH: "I know I am a planet because I have green plants. Plants are green because they have chlorophyll molecules that can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. That is how I know that I am a planet!"

COMET: "Thank you, Earth. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Earth in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "Oh no! I don't have any green plants!"

NARRATOR: "The journey continues toward the inner reaches of the solar system."

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Venus.*

COMET: *[wait for Venus to be onstage]* "Ho there, Venus! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet."

VENUS: "Just look at me! I wear a veil of beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

COMET: "Thank you, Venus. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Venus in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I don't have bright shining clouds. I don't have any clouds at all."

NARRATOR: "The journey continues. The two travelers were becoming uncomfortably hot. Icy Comet is beginning to worry about melting if they linger long this close to the Sun."

COMET: "Whew, it is hot! Only one more planet to go! Then we can return to the cool relief of the outer Solar System!"

TEACHER: *Chooses someone to play Mercury.*

COMET: *[wait for Mercury to be onstage]* "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."

COMET: "Thank you, Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *Assist Mercury in returning to his/her seat.*

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

NARRATOR: *[Wait for Mercury to sit down and everyone is quiet. Then speak:]* "At last the journey has come to an end. Icy Comet turns sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two head back toward the cool relief of the outer Solar System. But now Pluto cries out in despair. . ."

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended. I am quite sure that I am not a planet!"

COMET: *[Do what narrator says you do.]*

NARRATOR: "There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . ."

SUN: *[stretches out arm in gesture of "HALT!"]*

NARRATOR: "All of a sudden their journey comes to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move — not even an inch. Something was holding them back. . ."

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: "It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: "Yes, my *dwarf planet*."

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: "Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but YOU are."

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: "A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round. But a dwarf planet is too small to clear its own path of asteroids and little space rocks. So your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."

PLUTO: "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Dear Pluto, you are one of my very special dwarf planets, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet friend shares, too."

COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you — my darling, sweet Comet! What you and Pluto both share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. That is what holds all of you in your orbits!"

PLUTO and **COMET:** [*look at one another and jump for joy!*]

SUN: "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, I adopted you. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap."

PLUTO and **COMET:** [*Turn together and move slowly back to the outer Solar System; listen for narrator saying you fall asleep.*]

NARRATOR: "Pluto and Icy Comet happily return to the outer reaches of the Solar System, where Pluto promptly falls asleep, dreaming happy dreams, as planets and dwarf planets often do. . . . But wait! Our story is not yet over! . . ."

Many years pass after that grand adventure. Icy Comet is still seeing how close it can fly by planets and dwarf planets without risking capture. And Pluto is still orbiting on a slant. . . But now, whenever Icy Comet visits Pluto, this is how they greet one another:"

PLUTO: "Ho there, Icy Comet!"

COMET: "Ho there, Dwarf Planet Pluto!"

NARRATOR: "The end!"

“Pluto Parable”: **Sun**

You enter the play ONLY AT THE VERY END, maybe 15 or 20 minutes after the play starts.

*The Story is this: Pluto and Icy Comet will be visiting all the planets one by one, starting with the outermost planet, Neptune. You don't come onstage until the innermost planet, **Mercury**, has finished speaking.*

*So **go sit down now** somewhere behind the audience, so you don't distract them as you look over your script.*

*After you find a **seat** by yourself, read over the script below — just to be sure about **when** you will enter and **what** you will say and do.*

*Notice that your script starts with **Mercury** talking, so you don't have any of the first part of the play. So once you read through the whole thing, just set your script aside and **enjoy watching the play**.*

*Remember to **pick up your script and prepare to go on-stage when Mercury starts talking**.*

*Note: As Sun, your role is to sound and act like a **loving parent** when you speak your lines.*

*Note to Sun: **15 to 20 minutes** of script goes by before **Mercury** comes onstage.*

TEACHER: *[Chooses someone to play **Mercury**.]*

COMET: "Ho there, Mercury! Please tell us how you know that you are a planet. And please be quick about it, so that my Icy Comet friend doesn't melt!"

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."

COMET: "Thank you, Mercury. You have answered our question. Goodbye."

TEACHER: *[Assist Mercury in returning to his/her seat.]*

PLUTO: "I am not at all hot — at least not when I am in my own orbit."

SUN: *[**Start moving toward the stage.** Find a spot up front, somewhat distant to the **side** of Pluto and Icy Comet.]*

NARRATOR: "At last the journey has come to an end. Icy Comet turns sharply, with Pluto still snug in the curve of its tail. The two head back toward the cool relief of the outer Solar System. But now Pluto cries out in despair. . ."

PLUTO: "Oh, Icy Comet! Our journey has ended. I am quite sure that I am not a planet!"

SUN: *[Be in your spot up front now, and stand still.]*

NARRATOR: "There was nothing Icy Comet could do to comfort Pluto, except stroke the would-be planet tenderly with a somewhat melted icy tail. . ."

SUN: *[Stretch out arm toward Pluto/Comet in **HALT** gesture.]*

NARRATOR: "All of a sudden their journey comes to a standstill. Neither Pluto nor Icy Comet could move — not even an inch. Something was holding them back. . ."

PLUTO: "Whew! I have never felt this much gravity coming from Mother-Father Sun before. Something must be wrong!"

SUN: *[lower your arm and read:]* **"It is only to remind you, Pluto, that wherever you go, you are forever held within my gravitational embrace."**

PLUTO: "Mother-Father Sun! It is you!"

SUN: **"Yes, my dwarf planet."**

PLUTO: "You just called me a dwarf planet! Am I really a dwarf planet? Am I *your* dwarf planet?"

SUN: **"Indeed you are! Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are NOT dwarf planets, but YOU are."**

PLUTO: "What, then, makes me a dwarf planet?"

SUN: **"A dwarf planet is very much like a regular planet. It is big enough to be round. But a dwarf planet is too small to clear its own path of asteroids and little space rocks. So your orbit is a bit messier than the rest."**

PLUTO: "So, I guess I'm not a *real* planet."

SUN: "Dear Pluto, you are one of my very special dwarf planets, and I love you just the way you are. . . Besides, there is something far more important than size when you are a member of this family."

PLUTO: "What is that?"

SUN: "It is something that your Comet friend shares, too."

COMET: "What? You mean me?????"

SUN: "Yes, you — my darling, sweet Comet! What you and Pluto both share with the big planets is *my loving gravitational embrace*. It is my love for you, in the form of gravity, that holds all of you in your orbits!"

PLUTO and COMET: *[look at one another and jump for joy!]*

SUN: *[Smile and watch Pluto and Comet jump, then say:]* "It is true that you, Pluto, are different from the rest. Your orbit is slanted because you came to me from outside my original family of planets. You see, I adopted you. Yes, dear Pluto, I adopted you. And now, I hold you in my gravitational embrace just like I hold all the rest. . . So, go now, dear one, and return to your orbit in the company of your friend. I believe you are overdue for a nap." *[Your role is over. So stop reading your script and just stand there quietly and watch the rest of the play.]*

TEACHER: *Cut these **PLANET SCRIPTS** apart before class starts!*

NEPTUNE: "Whenever I look toward my Mother-Father Sun, I can see all my sibling planets. They look like boats sailing across the surface of a lake. That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

URANUS: "I know I am a planet because I am wrapped in thick clouds of gases, just like my Mother-Father Sun."

SATURN: "Oh, that is an easy question! Look at how beautifully the light of Mother-Father Sun shines on my lovely rings. They glisten silver and gold! That is how I know I am a true planet of this Solar System."

JUPITER: "I know I am a planet because I am nearly as big as my Mother-Father Sun."

MARS: "I know I am a planet because my surface looks red. I have been told that in another 5 billion years our Sun will also turn red. It will become a Red Giant. So that is how I know I am a true planet."

EARTH: "I know I am a planet because I have green plants. Plants are green because they have chlorophyll molecules that can absorb the sunlight coming from Mother-Father Sun. That is how I know that I am a planet!"

VENUS: "Just look at me! I wear a veil of beautiful thick clouds. Do you see how bright and lovely my clouds shine in the light of Mother-Father Sun? This is how I know that I am a planet."

MERCURY: "Hot! I am hot! I know I am a planet because my surface temperature is hot like my Mother-Father Sun. It is hot enough to melt lead."