

Name _____

Pluto: The Dwarf Planet That Sparked Curiosity

Short Answer Key

1. Pluto was discovered by Clyde Tombaugh at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona.
2. Pluto's thin atmosphere is primarily composed of nitrogen, methane, and carbon monoxide.
3. The largest moon of Pluto is Charon. Charon is significant because it is so large in comparison to Pluto that the two bodies are sometimes considered a binary system.
4. Pluto was reclassified as a "dwarf planet" by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in 2006 because it did not meet the new criteria set for planets. According to the IAU's definition, a planet must clear its orbit of other debris, and Pluto shares its orbital neighborhood with other Kuiper Belt objects.
5. The main achievement of NASA's New Horizons mission to Pluto in 2015 was conducting a historic flyby of Pluto, providing valuable data and images that expanded our knowledge of the dwarf planet, its surface, atmosphere, and geological features.

