

Prentice Hall Physical Science



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著者:Dolmatz

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In January 1983 the Infrared Astronomical Satellite (IRAS) was launched into space. Its job was to observe the universe through infrared sensors. Infrared is a form of light that is invisible to the human eye. Surveying the entire sky, IRAS discovered five new comets and a new asteroid. It examined galaxies hundreds of times brighter than the Milky Way. It even probed the gas and dust clouds between the stars. While scanning the star Vega, IRAS made an important discovery. A dusty ring surrounds this star. As yet, matter in the ring has not clumped together to form planets. But the existence of the ring is the first clear evidence that stars other than our sun may have planetary systems. Spectacular photographs of a universe never before seen have been radioed back to the earth by IRAS. Scientists examining the data have

confirmed an amazing scientific fact All visible objects--be they huge galaxies of stars or tiny particles of matter floating in space--are made of the same matter that is found on the earth. Nowhere in the universe is there matter unlike that which exists "at home." For even the fiery stars are composed of the same basic materials as the air the rocks the seas and you!

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目录:

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