

MISSION TO MARS

The big red planet & the great big dream.

Throughout history, people have looked to the night skies and wondered about the tiny, twinkling lights hanging in the darkness. What were they really? Diamonds? Fireflies dozens of miles away? For many, many years, no one really knew. But they could dream. And dream they did.

After telescopes were invented, astronomers (these are scientists who study outer space) could get a much better look. Among other things, they discovered that the dots that shined most brightly were planets and that Mars had clouds. Clouds! Just like Earth.

But what about these clouds? Were they like the ones here on Earth that float over our heads? Did this mean there was life on Mars? Astronomers dreamed that one day they could go there and find out. But to do that, they needed a big



DREAM BIG "If you can dream it, you can do it!"

plan. A plan SO BIG that it would take thousands of really smart people to dream up and billions of dollars to complete. But the giant challenge of their dream could not stop them. They set out to make it come true.

Start your journey now, Mars is 250 million miles away.

Astronomers, a very curious and dreamy bunch, want to know all kinds of facts. Things that will help us as humans. Things that will lead to other discoveries. Things about the other planets that circle the Sun like Earth does.

And as Earth's closest planetary neighbor, Mars is easier to study than, say, Pluto, the last planet in our solar system. But discovering more about the Big Red Planet meant one thing: It was a job for a very, VERY powerful spaceship. A ship with a spacey dune buggy to roll around and collect samples to send back to Earth.

I'm sure that you've guessed by now that taking a trip to Mars would be no easy task. It wouldn't just be hard, it'd be a brain-buster. Some people even said it was impossible. Some people said the astronomers had their heads stuck in space. But what do "some people" know? Not the power of a burning desire for knowledge. And certainly not the power of a team of dreamers working together to reach a gigantic goal.

