

WRITTEN BY MEGAN NOËL

MARS

EXPLORATION | 1960-2016



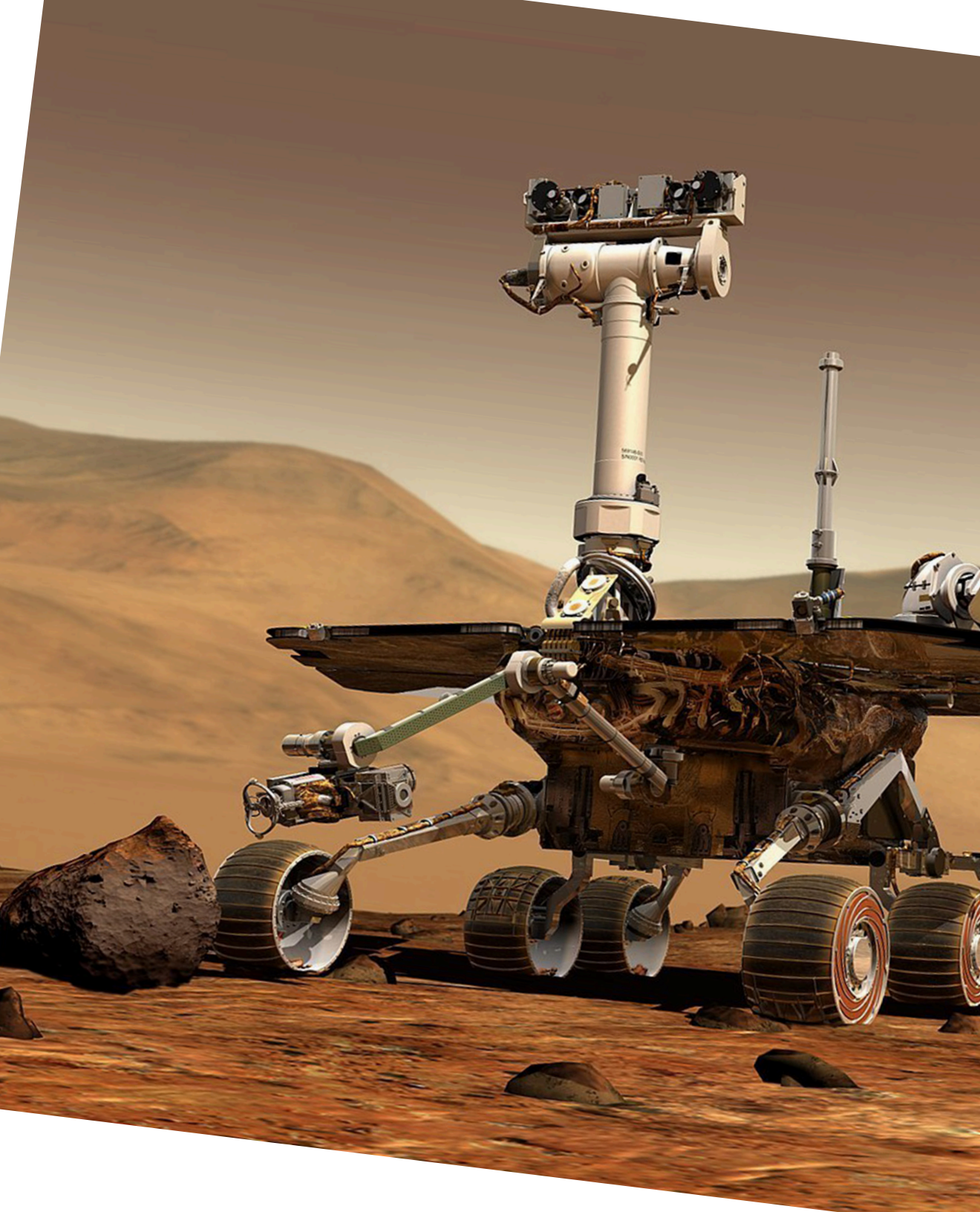
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY



Looking up into a clear night sky, you can sometimes catch a glimpse of a red-tinted sphere among the twinkling stars. That mysterious object is the fourth planet from the sun: Mars. If you have ever wondered what it might be like up there on the appropriately nicknamed Red Planet, you are not alone.


After a month-long dust storm finally cleared, Mariner 9 was able to send back a sizable collection of high-quality photographs that taught us many new things about the dry and dusty surface of Mars. We were able to see towering volcanoes, a vast canyon stretching 4,828 km (3,000 mi), and ancient river beds through which liquid water likely once flowed.





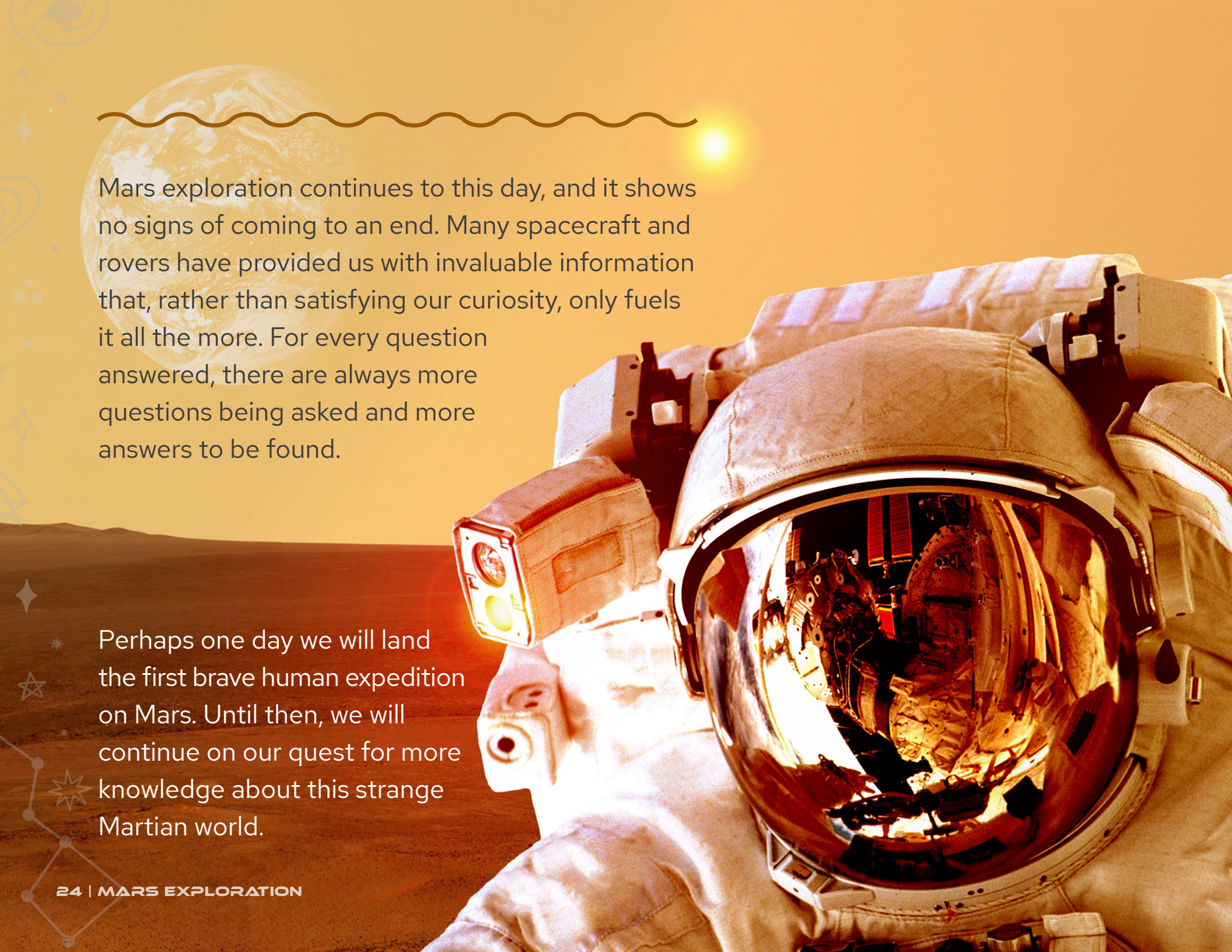
The USA landed solar-powered identical twin rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, on Mars in 2004. Their primary purpose was to search for more evidence of the liquid water—and potentially life—that scientists believe existed there a long time ago. Communication with Spirit was lost in 2010.

MARS EXPLORATION ROVER

The background of the slide features a vibrant green aurora borealis (Northern Lights) against a dark, starry night sky. On the left side, there are several white line-art icons: a globe with latitude and longitude lines, a five-pointed star, a rocket ship, and a constellation of stars connected by lines. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, containing a paragraph of text.

Would you believe that a spacecraft has been sent to Mars with the hope of gaining a better understanding of Earth's atmosphere? It's true! If you've ever been listening to the radio and heard static interference that sounded like you were hearing another station over your own music, your radio's signal may have been interrupted by electrically charged plasma layers in our ionosphere. This may also be related to the aurora borealis ("Northern Lights") which also occur in the ionosphere. Exploration of Earth's ionosphere would be extremely difficult here because it is too thin for airplane travel, yet it is too thick for a satellite to orbit without burning up.

AURORA BOREALIS



Mars exploration continues to this day, and it shows no signs of coming to an end. Many spacecraft and rovers have provided us with invaluable information that, rather than satisfying our curiosity, only fuels it all the more. For every question answered, there are always more questions being asked and more answers to be found.

Perhaps one day we will land the first brave human expedition on Mars. Until then, we will continue on our quest for more knowledge about this strange Martian world.



ORIGINAL PUBLICATION

MARS

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FOR
centuries
mankind has
been fascinated by
the bright red spot in
the sky that is Mars,
one of our nearest spatial
neighbors. The red planet was
discovered in the night skies more
than 4,000 years ago and since then
has inspired multiple generations with
dreams of space exploration and life on other
planets. Discover the ongoing scientific journey to
photograph and explore this mysterious planet, and perhaps
someday, to land the first human being on its cratered surface.