

Stars spark

*Li Hui Mok, Science Centre Board, Singapore*

Ancient civilizations such as Greek and Chinese developed systems to understand heavenly bodies and relate them to events on Earth. Through Greek myths and Chinese legends, we can gain an insight of how it was like in ancient times. Similarities in the two ancient cultures can also be drawn. Today we can use these stories to remind us of morals, seasons, and directions.

These programmes are conducted using a portable planetarium that fits around 30 persons at a time. The programmes are planned to coincide with occasions like mid autumn festival, which is celebrated mostly by Chinese in Singapore. In other seasons, these programmes are conducted during school holidays and selected Friday nights when we hold stargazing sessions at Science Centre's Observatory. On a regular stargazing night, the stories are told according to audience's interest, some may ask questions that lead from one constellation to another, till almost all the constellations visible in Singapore are mentioned!

Astronomy is a daunting subject. But when people hear of how ancient stories are used to mark the movement of sky objects, they learn the ancient ways of remembering patterns. By experiencing different methods of learning the beauty of astronomy, they start to lower their resistance against learning a difficult science topic. We hope that at the end of the day, we hear less of "I've never been able to appreciate science." sort of phrases.