

# Seven Stars- Logarithms

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Mathematics  
Course: Algebra II/Integrated Mathematics III- Logarithms  
Suggested Duration: 50 minutes

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

#### Montana Content Standards for Mathematics

**Building Functions F-BF.5 (+)** Understand the inverse relationship between exponents and logarithms and use this relationship to solve problems involving logarithms and exponents.

**Linear, Quadratic, and Exponential Models F-LE.4** For exponential models, express as a logarithm the solution to  $abct = d$  where  $a$ ,  $c$ , and  $d$  are numbers and the base  $b$  is 2, 10, or  $e$ ; evaluate the logarithm using technology.

#### Indian Education for All Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

**IEFA Essential Understanding 3:** The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

**IEFA Essential Understanding 6:** History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

### Understandings

- How the Crow star stories and constellations correspond to the Euro-American constellations.
- How to use and manipulate logarithmic formulas to learn about individual stars’ properties.

## Essential Questions

- How is the brightness of stars determined?
- What is the brightest star we can see from Earth?
- How do the stars in the Seven Stars constellation compare to the sun?

## Students will be able to...

- use known data to calculate unknown values.
- use the properties of logarithms to simplify and solve problems.
- compare very large and very small numbers.
- manipulate formulas/derive own formulas

## Students will know...

- the story of the Seven Stars as told by a Crow Elder from Lodge Grass.
- the definitions of absolute magnitude, apparent magnitude, luminosity, and parsec.
- the names of the stars in the Big Dipper/Seven Stars constellation.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Worksheet with table containing star information, vocabulary, formulas, and star map.
2. Worksheet with questions answered and turned in.

### Other Evidence

1. Participation in classroom discussion.
2. Observation of data calculation.
3. Assessment on logarithms at the end of the unit/chapter.
4. Individual questioning of students.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities

State the “Understandings” for the lesson.

Read aloud the Seven Stars excerpt, (“The Seven Brothers,” second variant), from *The Stars We Know: Crow Indian Astronomy and Lifeways* by Timothy P McCleary. Discuss the names of the stars/planets/constellations, both the Crow as well as their commonly known names.

Handout the worksheet with the star table, formulas, vocabulary, and star map. Read the stars' names (check online for proper pronunciation if necessary) and note that the first eight stars are from the Seven Stars story. Go over the vocabulary with the class, making sure to stress the difference between apparent and absolute magnitudes. Go over the formulas and variables making sure students understand when/why to use each one.

Have students fill in the table, leaving Alioth blank (they will fill this in later). Go over values together as a class; make sure everyone has the correct values in the table. Use the last formula for filling in the "Brightness" column.

Look at the values for the sun, Polaris, and Sirius and note how distance has an effect of the magnitude and brightness — just because a star has a higher absolute magnitude, it is not necessarily brighter to viewers on Earth.

Discuss which stars seem to be the brightest — are any actually brighter than the sun? Polaris? Sirius? (Sample response: All of the stars in the table are many times brighter than the sun but much farther away so they do not appear as bright to us on Earth. Polaris is the brightest star, being 2271 times brighter than the sun but is the farthest away of the stars in the table by over 300 light years. Although Sirius is visually the brightest star, all but Alcor and the sun are brighter when distance is factored into the comparison.)

Ask if there are any stars that appear brighter to us on Earth but are really not as bright as the others. (Sample response: Sirius is the third dimmest when comparing brightness but is the most visible in the night sky. Look for stars that have absolute magnitudes that are more than 1.5 units higher than their apparent magnitudes. The sun is the most obvious, going from being the most visible from Earth to having the highest absolute magnitude.)

Hand out worksheet with questions. Have the students complete questions 1 and 2 and fill in the information for Alioth in the table. Go over the answers. Discuss whether these new values change the answers to Learning Activity 4? (Sample: Not really but it does move from being the third most visible to having the sixth lowest absolute magnitude.)

Have students complete question 3 on worksheet (you may want to do this one together on the board or give them a hint to start out). Discuss the answer and discuss which star appears brighter from Earth. (Sirius appears brighter, but Polaris is really much brighter when distances are equal.)

If there is time, have students complete question 4 on the worksheet and check answers or assign as homework and discuss the next day.

Summary: You have learned how the story behind the Seven Stars in the Crow culture and how those stars compare to the brightest stars as seen from Earth. You should now be able to use logarithmic formulas to calculate and simplify data and apply those formulas to real world situations.

## Extension

This lesson could be extended by have students research the actual size of different stars and determine if the size of a celestial body affects magnitude and luminosity, and, if so, with what type of relationship (linear, exponential, logarithmic, etc.).

## Materials/Resources Needed

- Worksheets for each student.
- Seven Stars story (“The Seven Brothers,” second variant) from *The Stars We Know: Crow Indian Astronomy and Lifeways* by Timothy P. McCleary
- Scientific calculators for students.
- For more information about astronomy in general and sky maps, go to [Observational Astronomy](#).

## Additional Resources

[Montana Skies: Crow Astronomy Teachers Guide](#)

[Montana Skies: Crow Astronomy DVD](#)

## Montana Content Standards and IEFA Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

### [Montana Content Standards for Mathematics – Grades 9-12](#)

*The high school standards specify the mathematics that all students should study in order to be college and career ready. Additional mathematics that students should learn in order to take advanced courses such as calculus, advanced statistics, or discrete mathematics is indicated by (+).*

### [Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#)

## Student Worksheet 1

	Star	Distance in Light Years	Distance in Parsecs	Apparent Magnitude	Absolute Magnitude	Brightness
<b>Big Dipper or Seven Stars</b>	Alioth					
	Alkaid	100		1.85		
	Dubhe	120		1.87		
	Mizar	78		2.27		
	Alcor	82		3.99		
	Merak	79		2.35		
	Phecda	84		2.43		
	Megrez	81		3.3		
	Polaris	430		2.01		
	Sirius	8.6		-1.47		
	Sun	.000016		-26.73		

### Formulas

$m = 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L}{L_0}$	$m$ —apparent magnitude $L$ —luminosity of star $L_0$ —luminosity of a sixth magnitude star (constant)
$M = m + 5 - 5 \log d$	$M$ —absolute magnitude
$d = \frac{l}{3.262}$	$d$ —distance from earth, in parsecs $l$ —distance from earth, in light years
$b = 2.512^{4.8-M}$	$b$ —brightness of a star as compared to the sun

### Vocabulary

*Apparent magnitude:* The degree of brightness of a celestial body designated on a numerical scale, on which the brightest star (after the sun) has magnitude -1.4 and the faintest visible star has magnitude 6.

This rates how visible a celestial body is from Earth.

*Absolute magnitude:* The magnitude of a star as it would appear to a hypothetical observer at a distance of 10 parsecs or 32.6 light-years.

This rates how visible celestial bodies are when they are all viewed from the same distance.

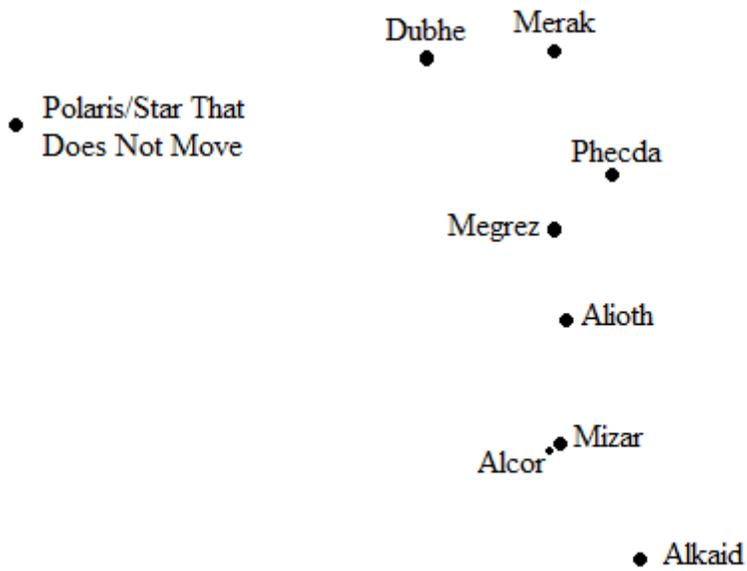
*Luminosity:* The brightness of a star in comparison with that of the sun.

*Parsec:* A unit of astronomical length based on the distance from Earth at which stellar parallax is one second of arc, equivalent to 3.262 light years.

*Light year:* The distance light travels in a vacuum in one year, 5.88 trillion miles or 9.46 trillion kilometers.

● Sirius/Bright Star/Morning Star

Big Dipper/Seven Stars



## Student Worksheet 2

1. The star Alioth is approximately 101 times brighter than the sun. What is its absolute magnitude?
2. If Alioth's apparent magnitude is 1.76, how far from Earth is it in terms of parsecs and light years?
3. Luminosity comparisons between other celestial bodies can be done by finding the difference in apparent magnitudes. Showing all steps, find how much brighter Polaris is than Sirius. Round final answer to the nearest whole number.
4. Using the formulas given, write one formula for finding apparent magnitude when given absolute magnitude and distance in light years.

## Teacher Worksheet 1

Star	Distance in Light Years	Distance in Parsecs	Apparent Magnitude	Absolute Magnitude	Brightness	
<b>Big Dipper or Seven Stars</b>	Alioth	82	25	1.76	-.21	101
	Alkaid	100	31	1.85	-.58	142
	Dubhe	120	37	1.87	-.96	201
	Mizar	78	24	2.27	.38	59
	Alcor	82	25	3.99	2	13
	Merak	79	24	2.35	.43	56
	Phecda	84	26	2.43	.38	59
	Megrez	81	25	3.3	1.33	24
Polaris	430	132	2.01	-3.59	2271	
Sirius	8.6	3	-1.47	1.4	23	
Sun	.000016	.00000494	-26.73	4.8	1	

### Formulas

$$m = 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L}{L_0}$$

$m$ —apparent magnitude  
 $L$ —luminosity of star  
 $L_0$ —luminosity of a sixth magnitude star (constant)

$$M = m + 5 - 5 \log d$$

$M$ —absolute magnitude  
 $d$ —distance from earth, in parsecs  
 $l$ —distance from earth, in light years

$$d = \frac{l}{3.262}$$

$d$ —distance from earth, in parsecs  
 $l$ —distance from earth, in light years

$$b = 2.512^{4.8-M}$$

$b$ —brightness of a star as compared to the sun

### Vocabulary

*apparent magnitude* The degree of brightness of a celestial body designated on a numerical scale, on which the brightest star (after the sun) has magnitude -1.4 and the faintest visible star has magnitude 6.

This rates how visible a celestial body is from Earth.

*absolute magnitude* The magnitude of a star as it would appear to a hypothetical observer at a distance of 10 parsecs or 32.6 light-years.

This rates how visible celestial bodies are when they are all viewed from the same distance.

*luminosity* The brightness of a star in comparison with that of the sun.

*parsec* A unit of astronomical length based on the distance from Earth at which stellar parallax is one second of arc, equivalent to 3.262 light years.

*light year* The distance that light travels in a vacuum in one year, 5.88 trillion miles or 9.46 trillion kilometers.

## Teacher Worksheet 2

1. The star Alioth is approximately 101 times brighter than the sun. What is its absolute magnitude?

$$b = 2.512^{4.8-M}$$

$$101 = 2.512^{4.8-M}$$

$$\log(101) = \log(2.512^{4.8-M})$$

$$2 = (4.8 - M) * \log(2.512)$$

$$2 = (4.8 - M) * 0.4$$

$$5 = 4.8 - M$$

$$-0.2 = M$$

2. If Alioth's apparent magnitude is 1.76, how far from Earth is it in terms of parsecs and light years? Round final answers to the nearest whole number.

$$M = m + 5 - 5 \log d$$

$$-0.2 = 1.76 + 5 - 5 \log d$$

$$-6.96 = -5 \log d$$

$$1.392 = \log d$$

$$10^{1.392} = 10^{\log d}$$

$$25 = d$$

$$d = \frac{l}{3.262}$$

$$25 = \frac{l}{3.262}$$

$$82 = l$$

3. Luminosity comparisons between other celestial bodies can be done by finding the difference in apparent magnitudes. Showing all steps, find how much brighter Polaris is than Sirius. Round final answer to the nearest whole number.

METHOD 1

$$m_P - m_S = \left( 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_0} \right) - \left( 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L_S}{L_0} \right) \qquad 3.48 = -2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_S}$$

$$m_P - m_S = -2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_0} + 2.5 \log \frac{L_S}{L_0} \qquad 1.392 = \log \frac{L_P}{L_S} \text{ (drop the negative)}$$

$$m_P - m_S = -2.5 \left( \log \frac{L_P}{L_0} - \log \frac{L_S}{L_0} \right) \qquad 10^{1.392} = 10^{\log \frac{L_P}{L_S}}$$

$$m_P - m_S = -2.5 \left( \log \frac{L_P/L_0}{L_S/L_0} \right) = -2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_S} \qquad 25 = \frac{L_P}{L_S}$$

$$2.01 - (-1.47) = -2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_S}$$

METHOD 2

	$m = 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L}{L_0}$
<i>POLARIS</i>	<i>SIRIUS</i>
$2.01 = 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_0}$	$-1.47 = 6 - 2.5 \log \frac{L_S}{L_0}$
$-3.99 = -2.5 \log \frac{L_P}{L_0}$	$-7.47 = -2.5 \log \frac{L_S}{L_0}$
$1.596 = \log \frac{L_P}{L_0}$	$2.988 = \log \frac{L_S}{L_0}$
$10^{1.596} = 10^{\log \frac{L_P}{L_0}}$	$10^{2.988} = 10^{\log \frac{L_S}{L_0}}$
$39 = \frac{L_P}{L_0}$	$973 = \frac{L_S}{L_0}$
$ratio = 973 \div 39 = 25$	

4. Using the formulas given, write one formula for finding apparent magnitude when given absolute magnitude and distance in light years.

$$M = m + 5 - 5 \log d$$

$$-m = -M + 5 - 5 \log d$$

$$m = M - 5 + 5 \log d$$

$$m = M - 5 + 5 \log \frac{l}{3.262}$$

$$m = M - 5 + 5(\log l - \log 3.262)$$

$$m = M - 5 + 5 \log l - 5 \log 3.262$$

$$m = M - 7.567 + 5 \log l$$