NEWSHOUR A NewsHour with Jim Lehrer special for students
EXTRA

PLANET CATEGORIZATION:
HOW DOES YOUR DEFINITION COMPARE?

According to the International Astronomical Union (August 2006)...

A **PLANET** is a celestial body that:
(a) is in orbit around the Sun,
(b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and
(c) has cleared the neighborhood around its orbit.

There are eight planets under this definition:
Mercury, Earth, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

A **DWARF PLANET** is a celestial body that:
(a) is in orbit around the Sun,
(b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape,
(c) has not cleared the neighborhood around its orbit, and
(d) is not a satellite.

A **SMALL SOLAR SYSTEM BODY** (also known as a **MINOR PLANET**) is a body that orbits the Sun, is too small to be a planet or dwarf planet, and is not a satellite.

A **KUIPER BELT OBJECT** is anything found in a disk-shaped region of icy debris at the edge of the solar system. Objects in this belt are about 4.5 to 7.5 billion km from the Sun.