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| **Claudius Ptolemy****Born 85 CE – Died 165 CE**Ptolemy lived in Alexandria, Egypt. This famous ancient city was founded by Alexander the Great. At the time, Alexandria was a great center of learning. There was a famous library where many Greek scholars studied. There was a school for **astronomers**. Wealthy families gave money to the library and schools. But then the Romans conquered Egypt in 30 BCE. There was less money for studying the stars. Ptolemy was the only great astronomer from Alexandria during this time. Claudius Ptolemy wasn’t only interested in stars and planets. He also studied maps, math, and **astrology**. He lived in Egypt, wrote in Greek, and had a Roman first name.Earth at the center of the universe?Ptolemy studied the Greek knowledge of the known Universe. Aristotle said that the Sun and the planets all revolve around Earth. This **geocentric** view sees Earth as the center of the Universe. (geo - Earth, centric - centered). Ptolemy agreed with Aristotle. Of course, the Earth is not the center of the Universe, as we now know. But amazingly, Ptolemy’s system worked. He could accurately predict the positions of planets. He could also accurately predict when the Sun and Moon would be **eclipsed**. Ptolemy studied the sky with his naked eye — no telescope. He used math to track the planets and stars. He saw a Universe with Earth in the center. Around Earth were huge transparent spheres. He thought that the Moon, Mercury, Venus, and the Sun all revolved around Earth. Past the Sun were Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Past Saturn was a final sphere that had all the stars attached to it. This final sphere revolved around the other spheres. Because his system worked, it was believed all over the world. For more than 1,400 years people accepted Ptolemy’s spheres. In 1543, though, Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, correctly claimed that the Sun is at the center of our Universe, not the Earth.His work lives onThe Roman Empire dissolved, and Muslim Arabs conquered Egypt in 641 CE. Muslim scholars mostly accepted Ptolemy’s astronomy. They corrected some of his errors, and made some advances, but they did not consider a **heliocentric** (Sun-centered) Universe. Ptolemy’s book was translated into Latin in the 12th century. This allowed his teachings to be spread throughout Western Europe. We know few details of Ptolemy’s life. But he left one personal poem, inserted right after the table of contents in his book:Well do I know that I am mortal, a creature of one day. But if my mind follows the wandering path of starsThen my feet no longer rest on earth, but standing by Zeus himself, I take my fill of ambrosia, the food of the gods.. |

**Vocabulary Word Bank**

**Astronomers**: Scientists who study space, stars, and planets.

**Astrology**: A pseudoscience that tries to use the alignment of stars and planets to predict the future.

**Geocentric**: A view of the universe that has the Earth at the center.

**Eclipsed**: When a planet or moon passes in front of a star.

**Heliocentric**: A view of the universe that puts the Sun at the center of our solar system.

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