Christmas Eve supermoon set to shine

LEVEL B1


Photo: Steve Busch / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever watched the Moon with friends or family? What did you notice?
2. What outdoor sky photo on your phone are you proud of? Why?
3. Do you prefer early mornings or late nights for stargazing? Why?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

- **supermoon**
  A full moon that looks bigger and brighter because it is closer to Earth.
- **orbit**
  The path one object takes as it goes around another in space.
- **perigee**
  The point in the Moon's orbit when it is closest to Earth.
- **apogee**
  The point in the Moon's orbit when it is farthest from Earth.
- **astronomer**
  A scientist who studies space, stars, and planets.
- **binoculars**
  Two small telescopes you hold to see distant things more clearly.
- **definition**
  The exact meaning of a word or idea.
- **oval**
  A rounded shape like a stretched circle.

III. READING

A rare supermoon is due on Christmas Eve, and sky-watchers could see a bigger, brighter full Moon. A supermoon happens when the Moon is closer to Earth, so it appears up to 30% bigger and 14% brighter than usual. Its official name is a perigee moon. The Moon's orbit around Earth is an oval, so its distance changes.

Apogee is the farthest point, and perigee is the closest. The peak of the full moon will be early in the morning on 24 December. Experts do not all use the same definition. Some stricter guides say the Moon must be within 360,000 kilometres of Earth.

Others, including the Royal Observatory Greenwich and Nasa, accept anything within 10% of perigee. Carys Herbert, an astronomer at the Royal Observatory, said it depends on which rule you use. Using the looser rule, 1912 and 2007 also qualify as Christmas Eve supermoons. However you count it, this event is rare—so get your binoculars ready.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News:** *"We'll get an incredibly rare supermoon this...". Original article linked at* theenglishwire.com.

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes a supermoon look bigger and brighter?
2. When will the peak of the full moon occur?
3. Which organisation and job title are linked to Carys Herbert?
4. What distance does the stricter definition require?
5. Which extra years count under the looser rule?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Where would you watch the supermoon from in your area? Why there?
2. What song would you play for a late-night sky watch? Explain your choice.
3. Who in your family or friends loves space? How did they get into it?
4. Would you set an alarm to see the peak? Why or why not?



VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past perfect

We use the past perfect for an action earlier than another past time: had + past participle (had seen, had been). Signals: before, by the time, already, when + past.

"By the time dawn came, the Moon **had reached** *perigee."*

"Our class **had planned** *to watch before clouds rolled in."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past perfect (had + past participle).

1. By moonrise, students (set up) ___ their binoculars.
2. Before 5 a.m., my friends (find) ___ a dark field.
3. When clouds cleared, our class (choose) ___ a spot.
4. By sunrise, the team (check) ___ the perigee time.
5. By the time we arrived, clouds (cover) ___ the view.

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Steve Busch / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 6–8 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or board: supermoon, orbit, perigee, apogee, peak, binoculars; check pronunciation of perigee/apogee and review percent (%).
- Run the reading twice: first for gist (what, when, how rare), then for detail using a short quiz race in pairs; finish with a quick class vote on which definition they prefer (strict vs looser) and why.
- Differentiation: stronger students write a two-sentence sky-watching tip; others match key terms to simple pictures (orbit, oval, binoculars) before answering questions.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands for favourite viewing spots, then pair students to justify their pick.
2. Invite first choices, then push for mood: tempo, lyrics, and how it fits the sky-watching vibe.
3. Have students tell a short story about that person; prompt with when, where, and why it started.
4. Poll who would/wouldn't set an alarm, then mix pairs from each side to share reasons and advice.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 60-word sky-watching plan for 24 December with time, place, and gear.

Presentation: In small groups, design and present a one-minute guide to spotting a supermoon safely.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past perfect

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Steve Busch / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes a supermoon look bigger and brighter?
   The Moon is closer to Earth.
2. When will the peak of the full moon occur?
   Early in the morning on 24 December.
3. Which organisation and job title are linked to Carys Herbert?
   The Royal Observatory Greenwich, and she is an astronomer.
4. What distance does the stricter definition require?
   Within 360,000 kilometres of Earth.
5. Which extra years count under the looser rule?
   1912 and 2007.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past perfect (had + past participle).

1. By moonrise, students ___ their binoculars. **had set up**
2. Before 5 a.m., my friends ___ a dark field. **had found**
3. When clouds cleared, our class ___ a spot. **had chosen**
4. By sunrise, the team ___ the perigee time. **had checked**
5. By the time we arrived, clouds ___ the view. **had covered**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: We use the past perfect for an action earlier than another past time: had + past participle (had seen, had been). Signals: before, by the time, already, when + past. (Examples constructed.)

"By the time dawn came, the Moon **had reached** *perigee."*

"Our class **had planned** *to watch before clouds rolled in."*