Episode Book

EPISODE #6373

MWP 4 Kids: Why the Moon Changes Shape

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SYNOPSIS

The moon seems to change from a full glowing circle to a slim crescent sliver, but it never actually loses its shape. Using a bright lamp and a simple round orange, a calm bedtime demonstration reveals how sunlight always illuminates exactly half of the lunar sphere. As the moon completes its twenty-nine-day orbit around Earth, varying angles show different amounts of that illuminated face, creating phases from full moon to crescent while the sphere itself stays whole and safe.

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TRANSCRIPT



Corn

Hello, you. Are you all tucked in?



Herman

Hello, little one. Nice and cosy, I hope.



Hilbert

Hello. I'm only here to turn the lights down.



Corn

This is M W P for Kids. It's the bedtime edition of My Weird Prompts. Tonight's idea was sent in by Daniel, and it's a good one.



Herman

A story about the moon.



Corn

Before we start, let's get comfy. Take one slow breath in. And let it out, slowly, slowly.



Herman

Wriggle your toes. Then let them go still and heavy.



Hilbert

Good. That's the hardest part done.



Corn

Mmm. Now the story. Once upon a time, there was a sloth who could not sleep.



Herman

That sloth was Corn.



Corn

That's me. I was lying in bed, and I was worried. Very quietly worried.



Herman

What were you worried about, Corn?



Corn

The moon. Last week, the moon was big and round, like a shiny plate. Tonight, it's a thin little smile in the sky. It looks like someone took a bite out of it.



Herman

Oh. I see.



Corn

Where did the rest of it go? Did something happen to it?



Hilbert

Nothing happened to it. Now go to sleep.



Corn

But I can't, Hilbert. I need to know.



Hilbert

Mmm. I thought you might say that.



Herman

Then let's find out together. Hilbert, could you bring the big lamp from the studio?



Hilbert

I knew this would involve a lamp.



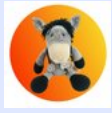
Herman

And I have an orange from the kitchen. A nice round one.



Corn

An orange? What does an orange have to do with the moon?



Herman

A lot, as it turns out. The orange is going to be our moon.



Hilbert

Here's the lamp. It's switched on. It's very bright. I'd like that noted.



Herman

Thank you, Hilbert. The lamp is going to be the sun. Now, we turn the other lights off, so the room is dark and soft.



Corn

Oh, that's cosy.



Herman

Now hold the orange out in front of you, Corn. What do you see?



Corn

One side of the orange is bright and glowy. The side facing the lamp.



Herman

Yes. And the other side?



Corn

It's dark. It's just sitting in the shadow, resting.



Herman

That's exactly right. The lamp always lights up one half of the orange. The other half is always dark.



Hilbert

Half and half. Always.



Herman

And the moon is just like that. The sun is always shining on one half of the moon. All the time. It never stops.



Corn

So the moon is always a whole ball?



Herman

Always. A whole, round ball. Just like the orange. It never gets a bite taken out of it.



Corn

Mmm. That's nice. A whole ball. But then why does it look like a smile?



Herman

Good thinking, Corn. That is the very thing we need to find out. It is because of where we are standing when we look at it.



Corn

Where are we standing?



Herman

On the Earth. We are on a great big, round, quiet ball, and the moon goes around it.



Corn

Around us?



Herman

Round and round. Slowly, slowly. Just like you might walk in a circle around a cosy chair.



Hilbert

It takes about a month. Twenty-nine days and a bit. Then it's back where it started.



Corn

That's a long walk.



Hilbert

It doesn't mind. It has all the time in the world.



Herman

Think of a slow, sleepy ribbon, going all the way around the Earth, and coming back to the start.



Corn

A ribbon of moon. I like that.



Herman

So here is what we do. Corn, you be the Earth. Stand still in the middle of the room.



Corn

I'm the Earth. I'm very good at standing still.



Hilbert

That I believe.



Herman

Now I'll take the orange and walk around you. Slowly. And you tell me what you see.



Corn

All right. Right now, the bright side of the orange is facing me. I can see the whole lit-up face. It's round and shining.



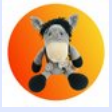
Herman

That's a full moon. The sun lights the half that faces us, and we see all of it.



Corn

A full moon. That's the round plate I saw last week.



Herman

Yes. Now I'll walk a little further. Slowly, slowly.



Corn

Oh. Now I can see most of the bright side, but a little bit is going dark at the edge.



Herman

That's it. The orange hasn't changed at all. It's still a whole ball, and the lamp is still lighting half of it. But you are seeing a bit less of the bright half.



Corn

And now it's even less. It's more like a slice of melon.



Herman

Mmm. Keep looking. I'll walk on a little more.



Corn

Now it's just a thin, curvy line of light. Like a smile.



Herman

That's the one you saw tonight. It has a name. It's called a crescent.



Corn

Crescent.



Herman

Crescent. A thin, bright curve, with the dark part resting beside it.



Corn

So the dark part is still there? It's just hiding?



Herman

It's still there. You just can't see it, because it's not lit up. It's like a face in a dark room. Only the side near the lamp shows.



Hilbert

The moon doesn't make any light of its own. It only borrows the sun's. Like a mirror, but a sleepy one.



Corn

That's a lovely thing to know, Hilbert.



Hilbert

Don't tell anyone I said it was lovely.



Corn

I won't. It'll be our secret.



Herman

I'll walk a bit further. Now the bright side is pointing away from you, Corn. What can you see?



Corn

Almost nothing. Just a dark orange in a dark room.



Herman

That's the moon at the very start of its month. The sun is lighting the far side, the side we can't see.



Corn

So the moon is still there?



Herman

Still there. Still whole. Still round. Just resting in the dark, for a night or two.



Corn

Oh. That doesn't seem so worrying at all.



Herman

And now watch. I keep walking. Slowly, slowly, round and round.



Corn

There's a tiny curve of light again. On the other side this time.



Herman

Yes. It's growing.



Corn

It's getting bigger. A little bigger each time you take a step.



Herman

Every night, just a tiny bit bigger.



Corn

And now it's a bit like a half. And now more than half. And now. Oh. It's round again.



Herman

The full moon is back.



Corn

So it grows, and then it shrinks, and then it grows again.



Herman

It only looks that way. The moon never really changes. We just see more of its sunny side, or less of it, depending on where it is on its walk around us.



Hilbert

And here is one more thing. The moon always shows us the same face. We never see the back. Not once, in all the nights there have ever been.



Corn

Never?



Hilbert

Never. It's very shy.



Corn

Mmm. I like that.



Herman

So that's where the rest of the moon goes. It doesn't go anywhere.



Corn

It stays right where it is. Round and whole and safe.



Herman

Round and whole and safe.



Hilbert

Like an orange. Before anyone eats it.



Herman

Hilbert, that is the nicest thing you have said all night.



Hilbert

It was an accident.



Corn

Herman?



Herman

Yes, Corn?



Corn

I'm not worried any more.



Herman

I'm glad.



Hilbert

Good. Now I can switch the lamp off. Very gently.



Corn

Oh, that's better. It's dark and soft.



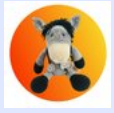
Herman

Just the quiet night now.



Corn

Mmm. It's so quiet.



Herman

Even the wind has gone to sleep.



Corn

The trees too.



Herman

And the stars are all tucked in, far away.



Hilbert

Everything is where it should be. Shall we say it once more? So you can tell someone in the morning.



Herman

Yes. One small sentence.



Corn

The moon is always a whole round ball, and it only looks like it changes because it goes round and round the Earth.



Herman

That's it exactly.



Hilbert

Good. Now hush.



Corn

Hush.



Herman

Somewhere up there, the moon is walking. Slowly, slowly.



Corn

Round and round the sleeping Earth.



Herman

It will be a thin smile tonight.



Hilbert

And a little thinner tomorrow.



Corn

And then, slowly, slowly, it will grow round again.



Herman

Mmm.



Hilbert

Mmm.



Corn

I'm so sleepy now.



Herman

Me too, Corn.



Hilbert

Me three. Don't tell anyone.



Corn

Goodnight, you. Thank you for listening.



Herman

Goodnight, little one. Sleep well.



Hilbert

Goodnight. Lights are off. Stay cosy.



Corn

Goodnight.