Cadette Space Science Researcher Badge
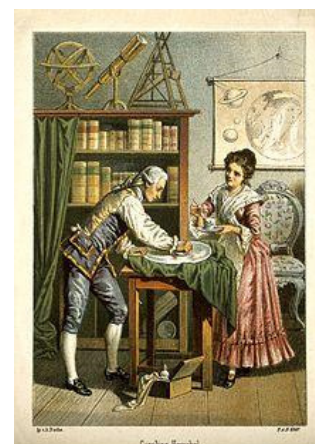
Early Female Astronomers

Share these pictures and bios of female astronomers with your troop.

Annie Jump Cannon

Annie Jump Cannon was an American astronomer who classified more than 225,000 stars. She compiled the largest accumulation of astronomical information ever assembled by a single individual, and perfected the star classification system we use today. Annie organized the stars into classes from hottest to coolest (O, B, A, F, G, K, M) by analyzing photographs of stellar spectra—the fingerprints of the elements that make up each star. To help remember the order, she invented the mnemonic Oh, Be A Fine Girl, Kiss Me! Can you invent your own phrase to remember the classes of stars?

Caroline Herschel

Caroline Herschel discovered several comets, and kept detailed notebooks of her and her brother's celestial observations. She made major contributions to the first catalogs of nebula and star clusters—known as the New General Catalogue of Nebulae and Clusters of Stars (NGC). She was the first woman to be paid for her astronomical work, as well as the first woman to receive the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS). In 1835 she was made an honorary member of the RAS along with Mary Somerville—historically becoming the first women members.

Credit: Wellcome Library, London
Sir William Herschel and Caroline Herschel.
Coloured lithograph by A. Diethe

Women in Space Science

For biographies of current female space scientists, visit NASA's Women@NASA website:
https://women.nasa.gov