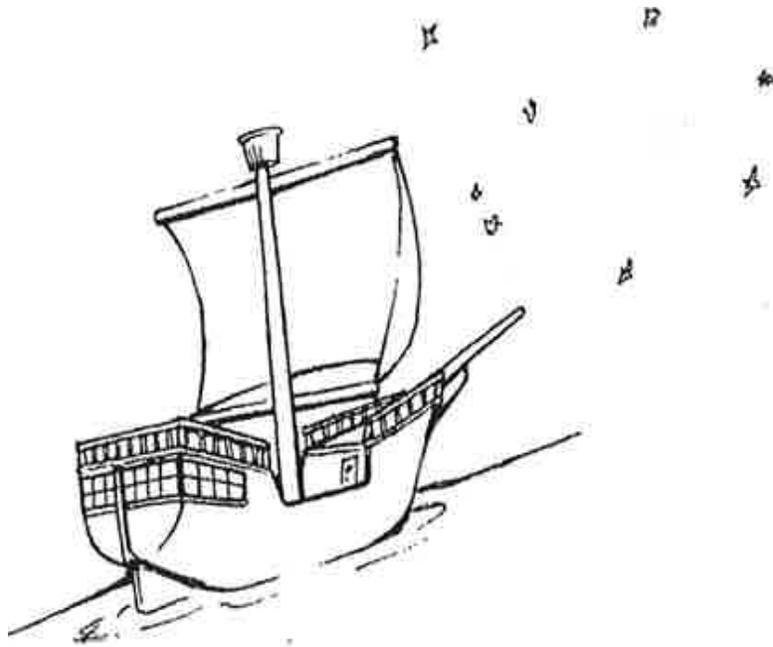


## Grouping Stars in the Sky

(Taken from the Utah State Science Teacher Resource Book, 2005, pages 11.1.4)

Stars in the sky have fascinated people throughout the ages. Many years ago when people were out tending their flocks, sailing their ships, traveling or just stargazing, they noticed how some stars were always visible at night. Other stars were only visible during certain months of the year. People charted when these stars appeared and how they were positioned.

They depended on these stars and star patterns for direction. Sky watchers noticed that during the spring, summer, fall and winter, there would be certain stars and star formations in the sky for each season. They began to make calendars of the months based on star formations.



## Grouping Stars in the Sky

(Taken from the Utah State Science Teacher Resource Book, 2005, pages 11.1.5)

Ancient Arabs, Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks were well aware of the different stars. Many varied interpretations were written and reported by those different populations. They had observed that some stars could be connected like a dot-to-dot picture. Depending on what they thought the picture looked like, ancient people associated them with objects, beasts or people. They wrote stories about stars related to heroes, heroines, and beasts of their time and culture. Since those ancient times, people have continued to make up stories, develop religious practices, and grow crops based on groups of stars.



Groups of stars are called *constellations*. People of all ages have discovered that constellations can be used as reference points. Sailors used them to help guide their ships at night. African-Americans fleeing slavery sought what they called the Drinking Gourd, or Big Dipper, found near the North Star, as a guide to freedom. Pioneers migrating west used constellations as a guide while traveling on the Oregon Trail. Constellations have been important, not only in the development of ancient civilizations, but in the development of modern ones as well.

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**constellation** – a pattern in the stars that has been identified and named