

The Moon Sails Past Mars in Gemini

On the nights of **March 7-9**, the waxing gibbous Moon passes by the bright planet Mars in the zodiac constellation Gemini, the Twins. On these evenings, Mars is 86 million miles away or some 8 light minutes.

Joining this conjunction are the two bright stars that represent the heads of the Gemini twins, Pollux and Castor. Although these two bright heavenly stars appear adjacent in the skies above, they are otherwise quite different.

Your unaided eyes will tell you that Pollux not only appears brighter than Castor, but also glows a different color. Can you see Pollux's cooler yellow-orange color, compared to the hot white glow of Castor? Pollux is located nearer to Earth than Castor. Castor's light comes to your eyes from 51 light years ago, while Pollux shines from a closer 34 light years – both very near to us by astronomical standards!

In mythology, these two star names derive from the immortal twin sons of Zeus and Leda.

