

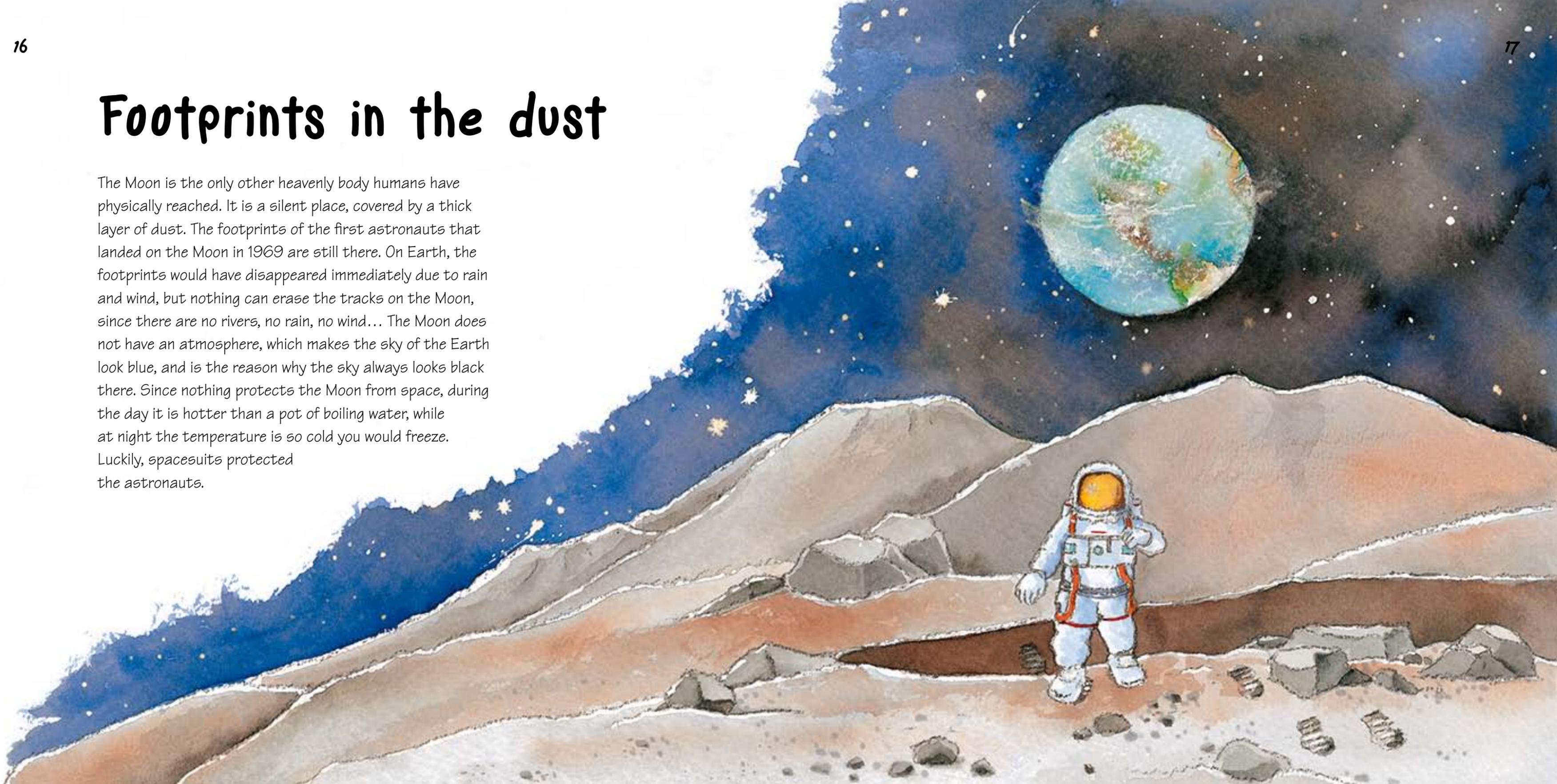
Infinity... and beyond

If you look up at the sky on a dark cloudless night, you will see lots of small bright spots. Each of these tiny dots is a huge star, so incredibly far away that if you could travel as fast as a beam of light it would take you a few years to get there. And some are so far away that we could not reach them even in a whole lifetime, or two, or a thousand! Our spaceships are terribly slow compared to the speed of light, so we will just have to wait until a fantastic discovery lets us visit them someday.



Footprints in the dust

The Moon is the only other heavenly body humans have physically reached. It is a silent place, covered by a thick layer of dust. The footprints of the first astronauts that landed on the Moon in 1969 are still there. On Earth, the footprints would have disappeared immediately due to rain and wind, but nothing can erase the tracks on the Moon, since there are no rivers, no rain, no wind... The Moon does not have an atmosphere, which makes the sky of the Earth look blue, and is the reason why the sky always looks black there. Since nothing protects the Moon from space, during the day it is hotter than a pot of boiling water, while at night the temperature is so cold you would freeze. Luckily, spacesuits protected the astronauts.





The red planet

Mars is smaller than the Earth, has two potato-shaped moons and is red. Scientists believe there was liquid water there a long time ago, but now most water is located at the planet's north and south poles, forming small ice caps. It is a dry, cold planet with very high volcanoes, deep valleys and huge red-sand deserts.



In recent years several rovers, like *Curiosity* and *Opportunity*, have successfully landed on Mars' surface. They have collected lots of pictures and scientific data. Future projects include the search for past or present life on the planet, as well as the possibility of sending humans in the decade of 2020.