# Red planet Renaissance

Just five years ago, astronomers viewed Mars as an essentially dead world. Recent discoveries made by the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft and gleaned from Martian meteorites have changed that opinion.

The new picture of a `youthful Mars' not only confirms that geological activity occurred abundantly in the first two thirds of Mars's history, but also that it has continued until comparatively recently, and probably persists up to the present day. These findings will have a dramatic effect on the human exploration of Mars, and the quest to learn whether life ever existed there.

In the next few decades the subsurface layers of Mars will be examined in a search for Martian microbes, either past or present. The test of whether life evolved on Mars is a major scientific problem because an answer either way would have profound consequences. If life did evolve on Mars, what was it like and what was its basis at the molecular level? If life never appeared on Mars, why didn't it, and does this mean that humanity is alone in the universe?

**1. Answer the following questions using your own words. (2 points: 1 point each)**

a) What was the most recent and surprising finding about Mars?

b) What would scientists have to answer if it was proved that life had never appeared on Mars?

**2. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? (1 point: 0.5 each)**

a) The findings were made live years ago.

b) There may be active volcanoes on Mars.

**3. Find a word or a phrase in the text which, in context, is similar in meaning to: (1 point: 0.5 each)**

a) considered, regarded

b) developed gradually

**4. Choose a, b or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct. (2 points: 0.5 each)**

1. The new evidence has been obtained ...

*a) while looking for Martian meteorites.*

*b) by a space station where there were meteorites.*

*c) by a space vehicle and after studying Martian meteorites.*

2. The discovery of geological activity on Mars means that ...

*a) there was life on Mars a long time ago.*

*b) there could be microbial life on Mars.*

*c) there is microbial life on Mars today.*

3. The writer suggests that ...

*a) these discoveries will be of great importance in the search for life on Mars.*

*b) liquid water does exist today on the surface of Mars.*

*c) these discoveries do not confirm geological activity*

4. Microbes will be searched for ...
   *a) by taking photographs.*
   *b) by studying meteorites.*
   *c) by examining parts of the ground.*

**5. Composition (100-150 words approximately). Choose one of the following topics. (4 points)**

1. If any kind of life was discovered on Mars, what would be the consequences?
2. We are alone in the universe. Do you agree?