**Is Pluto No Longer a Planet?**

In the game Pluto's Secret, Nat tells his friend   
Geo that he heard that Pluto is no longer a planet.   
Is Nat right? Is Pluto no longer a planet? There's   
debate in the scientific world.  National Geographic   
News says that, according to the International   
Astronomical Union (IAU), a full-fledged planet is an   
object that orbits the sun and is large enough to have   
become round due to the force of its own gravity.   
Because Pluto doesn't meet these standards, the IAU   
classifies Pluto as a dwarf planet.  
  
Not everyone agrees that this is a good way to decide,

though. Andy Cheng, a planetary scientist at Johns Hopkins

University, says that the new rules aren't clear enough and

asks the question "how round is round? ...I'll still continue

to maintain that Pluto is a planet," he said.  
  
Owen Gingerich is an astronomer and historian at Harvard

University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and head of the IAU

committee proposing the definition. He favored a special

distinction for Pluto. Gingerich supported a proposal to call

the big eight planets classical planets—as opposed to just

plain "planets"—and Pluto and the others dwarf planets, so

there would be two classes of planets. He believes that

reclassifying Pluto as a dwarf planet is not "sensitive to the

historical and cultural role that Pluto has played."  
  
The argument continues. In the meantime, however,

Nat and Geo are correct—new textbooks will list Pluto as

being a dwarf planet.

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