Scientist in the Spotlight



Benjamin Shaw

Astronomer

Benjamin Shaw, a British scientist, did his high school studies at the Brayton High School in North Yorkshire studying most of the standard GCSE subjects. After that he took on a different course of studies and went to Drama school, before completing his first degree in nuclear physics and his PhD in astrophysics. Presently, he is an astronomer at the University of Manchester.

Ben uses some of the largest radio telescopes in the world to observe pulsars, dead stars about the size of a city that spin hundreds of times a second. Much of his work looks at the interactions of different objects in space and how they are affected by gravity. His usual day begins at 8am when arrives at the office, makes coffee and catches up on the news over breakfast. Then he starts the job of looking through a huge amount of data taken overnight from the telescopes. The rest of the day is spent writing computer programs to **analyse** and clean the data. A few times a year, he goes to conferences. It gives him an opportunity to meet up with international colleagues; making new contacts and sharing international results from the field.

The best part of his job is getting to work on various projects with really talented, clever people who challenge and inspire him every day. However, the most challenging part of his job is that there is not enough hours in the day to do everything he wants to do, which can make him feel that he hasn't achieved much. But, when it all comes together eventually, it is extremely **satisfying**.

Ben says that as an 18 year-old, he wouldn't have believed that he would one day have a **doctorate** in astrophysics and do exciting research every day. He is very happy that he gets to work in one of the most fascinating and beautiful places in the world, the Jodrell Bank Observatory.

For this scientist, curiosity is a massive driver. Scientists work at the **boundary** of what is known and unknown about nature and the vast Universe. The search for the unknown is what keeps them going.

Activity

Use the scientist's profile to answer the following questions:

1. What is the scientist's job?

2. Briefly describe what the scientist does in a typical day.

3. What skills do they need for this job?

4. What do you think is the most interesting part of their job?

5. Describe how this job links with the science you have learned in this unit

6. State the definition of any words in **bold**.

Science Mastery

Scientist Fact File

Skills Needed for this job: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	Describe this job in your own words:
Similarities between this scientist and you:	Your opinion of this job:
+ -	Additional notes: