

How Killed Pluto And Why It Had It Coming



How I Killed Pluto and Why It Had It Coming by Mike Brown

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
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The Controversial Reclassification

In 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) made a controversial decision that sent shockwaves through the scientific community and beyond: they voted to reclassify Pluto from a planet to a dwarf planet. Since the discovery of Pluto in 1930, it had held the prestigious status of being the ninth planet in our solar system. But after seventy-six years, its planetary reign came to an abrupt end.

The decision was met with widespread outrage and disbelief. Many astronomers, scientists, and members of the public questioned the IAU's rationale and accused them of arbitrary and unscientific decision-making. Some even argued that the reclassification was a misguided attempt to appease the growing number of exoplanets being discovered outside our solar system.

The Scientific Basis

The IAU based its decision on a new definition of a planet. According to the IAU, a planet must meet three criteria:

1. It must orbit the Sun.
2. It must be massive enough to have a rounded shape under its own gravity.
3. It must have cleared the neighborhood around its orbit.

Pluto met the first two criteria but failed to meet the third. In other words, Pluto's orbit is intersected by the orbits of several other objects, including the dwarf planet Eris. This meant that Pluto had not "cleared the neighborhood" around its orbit and therefore did not meet the full criteria for a planet.

The Scientific Community's Reaction

The scientific community was divided over the IAU's decision. Some astronomers supported the reclassification, arguing that it was necessary to bring order to the solar system and provide a clear distinction between planets and dwarf planets. Others, however, condemned the decision, arguing that it was arbitrary and unscientific.

The debate over Pluto's status continues to this day. Some scientists believe that the IAU's definition of a planet is too restrictive and that Pluto should be reinstated as a planet. Others argue that the reclassification was justified and that Pluto is better classified as a dwarf planet.

The Cultural Impact

The reclassification of Pluto had a significant cultural impact. For many people, Pluto was an iconic part of their childhood. They had grown up

learning about the nine planets in our solar system, and the removal of Pluto from that list was seen as a betrayal of their childhood memories.

The reclassification also raised important questions about the nature of science. What is a planet? Who decides? And how do we balance scientific knowledge with cultural sentiment?

The decision to reclassify Pluto was a complex and controversial one. It was based on sound scientific reasoning, but it also had a significant cultural impact. The debate over Pluto's status continues to this day and is likely to continue for many years to come.

However, one thing is for sure: Pluto's demotion from planet status does not diminish its importance or its place in our solar system. It remains a fascinating and unique object, and it will continue to be a source of scientific research and cultural fascination for years to come.

Additional Resources

* [The IAU's definition of a planet]

(<https://www.iau.org/public/themes/definition-of-a-planet/>) * [The discovery of Eris]

(https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/spitzer/news/spitzer20050929.html) *

[The debate over Pluto's status]

(<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/pluto-is-a-planet-after-all/>)

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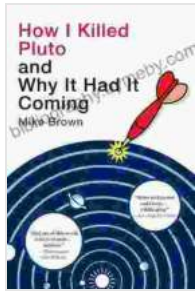
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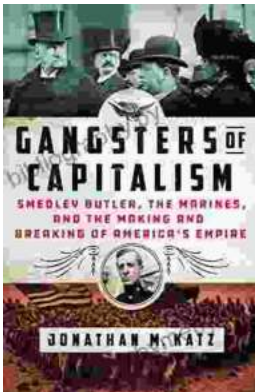
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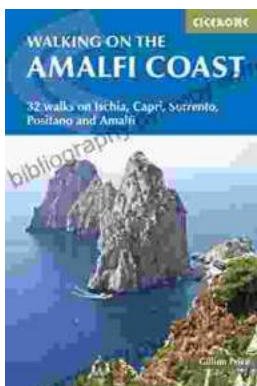


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