

## Europe – Extra Credit Ireland

Directions: This is an extra credit reading, research and response assignment about a particular location in Europe. You will read a short article and answer questions about it. Additional questions will require you to research further information about the country or subject.

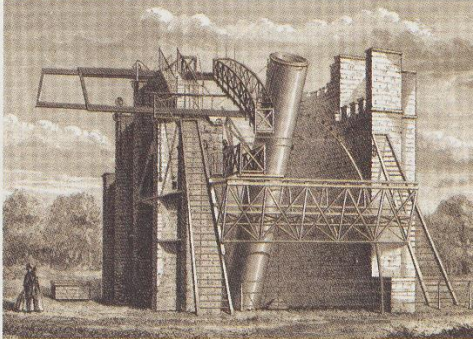
It can be printed or can be hand-written on lined paper. All questions must be answered to receive credit.

**LEVIATHAN OF PARSONSTOWN**

**BIRR, OFFALY**

William Parsons, the third earl of Rosse, built this 58-foot (17.7 m) telescope in the 1840s to investigate the space phenomena he knew as “nebulae.” At the time, telescopes were not powerful enough to show that these so-called nebulae were actually an assortment of different objects ranging from star clusters and galaxies to clouds of gas and dust. Parsons’s six-foot-wide (2 m) telescope lens exposed the solar system in greater detail than ever before—though it was not until the 1920s that Edwin Hubble discovered that some of the fuzzy objects were in fact galaxies.

Dubbed the “Leviathan of Parsonstown,” Parsons’s reflecting telescope remained the largest in the world for over 75 years. However, following the death of the earl of Rosse—and that of his son, who tended to the instrument in his absence—the telescope fell into disuse in 1878 and was dismantled in 1908. Thanks to the seventh and current earl, the telescope was reconstructed in the late 1990s with



The Leviathan may look like a cannon, but it was made for stargazing.

a new mirror and motors. You can now see the restored Leviathan and learn about its workings in the attached science center.

**Birr Castle, Birr. Two hours from Dublin by car and about one hour from Shannon Airport and Galway city.**  
☎ 53.097123 📍 7.913780

Excerpt from *Atlas Obscura: An Explorer's Guide to the World's Hidden Wonders* by Joshua Foer, Dylan Thuras and Ella Morton 2016. Workman Publishing

### Part One – About the Article

1. What “object” did Parson discover with his telescope? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How were scientists later able to show that these objects were actually many different types of things?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What famous astronomer discovered that some of the objects were galaxies? \_\_\_\_\_

### Part Two – Digging Deeper

4. The Leviathan of Parsonstown was the world’s largest telescope in 1845 and remained the largest in the world until 1917 when what new 100 foot telescope was built? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Offaly, where Parson’s telescope is located, is in the country of Ireland. What country was Parsons from? What happened in 1922 that changed the relationship between these two countries?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you were scientist in charge of a large telescope, what types of objects in space would you want to look at? \_\_\_\_\_