



Second Adventures in Astronomy

Life on Mars

David Mitchell:

Sixty second adventures in astronomy. Number six, life on Mars.

For centuries writers, astronomers and David Bowie have been asking 'Is there life on Mars?'

The idea that we are alone in the universe seems incredible... so people have dreamed up all types of alien.

We know there aren't any 'bug-eyed monsters' on Mars. But it does have a lot of places where microbes could live.

This may inspire a low budget movie, but crucially, if life on Mars started independently from life on Earth, then it's much more likely that it could also start in other places in the Universe.

(But) over billions of years spent with asteroids crashing into them, Earth and Mars have exchanged more pieces of rock than geologists at Christmas.

And those rocks could carry microbes from one to the other. Meaning any life on Mars could have come from Earth in the first place. So it would tell us nothing about the likelihood of life originating on the planets of other stars.

Though it would pose another question; did life on Mars come from Earth, or did life on Earth originally come from Mars?

In which case, martians could be a lot closer to home than we thought.