



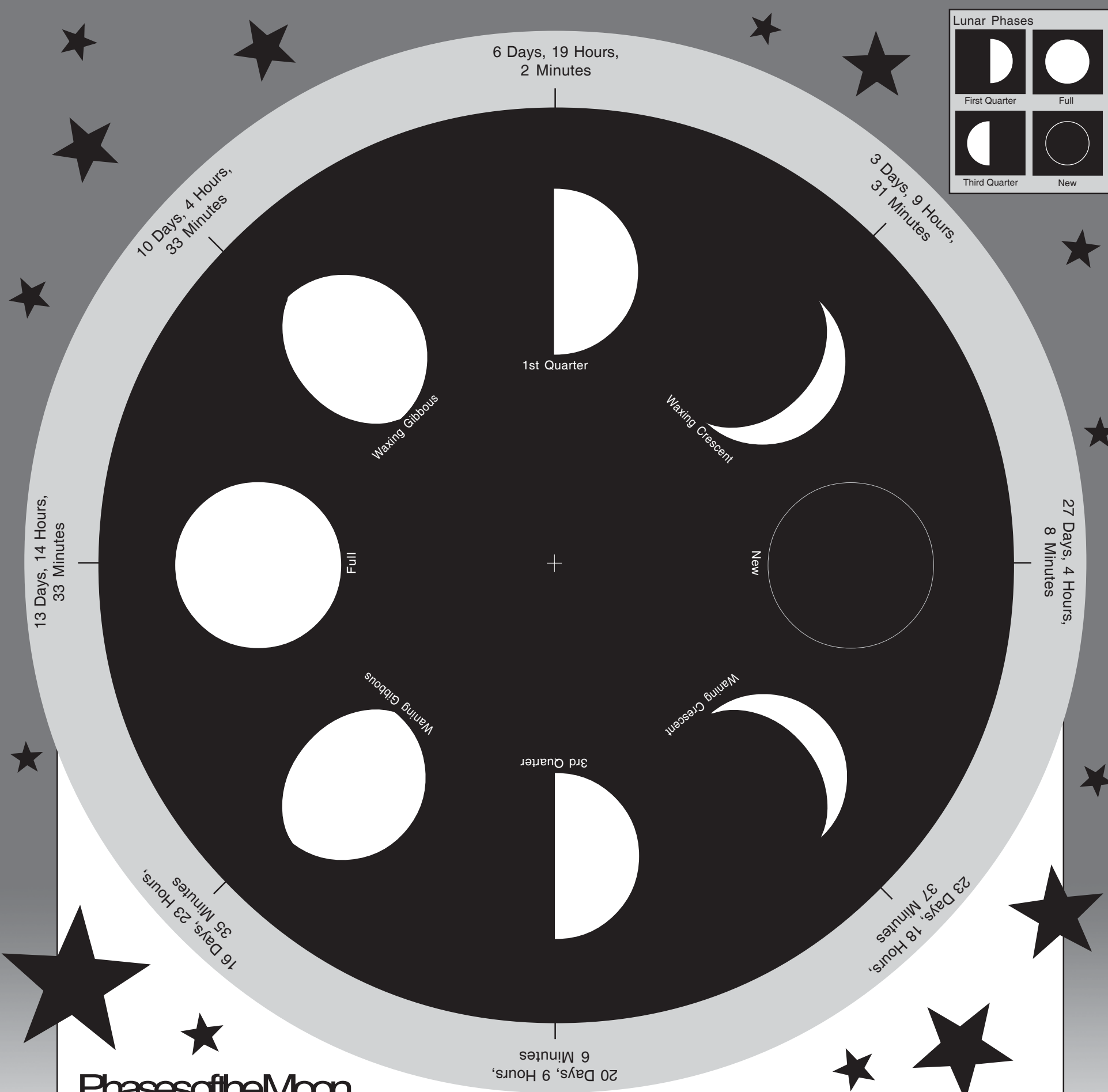


Lunar Phases	
	
First Quarter	Full
	
Third Quarter	New



## Phases of the Moon

The revolution of the Moon around the Earth makes the Moon appear as if it is changing shape in the sky. This is caused by the different angles from which we see the bright part of the Moon's surface. These are called "phases" of the Moon. Of course, the Moon doesn't generate any light itself; it just reflects the light of the Sun. The phases always follow one another in the same order. Below are the names of the major shapes and a description of each.

**New Moon:** The lighted side of the Moon faces away from the Earth. This means that the Sun, Earth, and Moon are almost in a straight line, with the Moon in between the Sun and the Earth. The Moon that we see looks very dark.

**Waxing Crescent:** This Moon can be seen after the New Moon, but before the First Quarter Moon. The crescent will grow larger and larger every day, until the Moon looks like the First Quarter Moon.

**First Quarter:** The right half of the Moon appears lighted and the left side of the Moon appears dark. During the time between the New Moon and the First Quarter Moon, the part of the Moon that appears lighted gets larger and larger every day, and will continue to grow until the Full Moon.

**Waxing Gibbous:** This Moon can be seen after the First Quarter Moon, but before the Full Moon. The amount of the Moon that we can see will grow larger and larger every day. ("Waxing" means increasing, or growing larger.)

**Full Moon:** The lighted side of the Moon faces the Earth. This means that the Earth, Sun, and Moon are nearly in a straight line, with the Earth in the middle. The Moon that we see is very bright from the sunlight reflecting off it.

**Waning Gibbous:** This Moon can be seen after the Full Moon, but before the Last Quarter Moon. The amount of the Moon that we can see will grow smaller and smaller every day. ("Waning" means decreasing, or growing smaller.)

**Last Quarter or Third Quarter:** The left half of the Moon appears lighted, and the right side of the Moon appears dark. During the time between the Full Moon and the Last Quarter Moon, the part of the Moon that appears lighted gets smaller and smaller every day. It will continue to shrink until the New Moon, when the cycle starts all over again.

**Waning Crescent:** This Moon can be seen after the Last Quarter Moon and before the New Moon. The crescent will grow smaller and smaller every day, until the Moon looks like the New Moon.

## Why do the Moon have phases?

The Moon has phases because it orbits Earth, which causes the portion we see illuminated to change. The Moon takes 27.3 days to orbit the Earth, but the lunar phase cycle (from New Moon to New Moon) is 29.5 days.

