A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

A In October 2017, astronomers in Hawaii saw something surprising. A **strange** object was moving through the solar system. They had seen many asteroids before, but this was something different. It was long and **thin**—like a cucumber. The object's **speed** and direction also showed something surprising. This was an interstellar[1] object—the first ever seen.

B The object was named 'Oumuamua—Hawaiian for "visitor from afar." Nobody is sure exactly what it is. The simplest idea is that 'Oumuamua is a strangely shaped piece of rock. Perhaps it was **knocked** out of a far-off star system. However, astronomers saw that its speed increased after **passing** the sun. Some scientists therefore suggest a different theory.

C "'Oumuamua could be a piece of alien **technology**," says Professor Abraham Loeb from Harvard University. Loeb believes this could explain the object's long, thin shape, and also its change in speed. **Maybe** 'Oumuamua was a spaceship that came to **explore** our solar system. "All possibilities should be considered," says Loeb.

Professor Abraham Loeb suggested that 'Oumuamua could be an alien spaceship.

D 'Oumuamua can no longer be seen from Earth. But astronomers continue to study the information they got from it. It is still not clear if the object was a large rock, or something else altogether. 'Oumuamua will likely be a mystery for many years to come.

1 If an object is described as **interstellar**, it has traveled between different stars.

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