**Engaging Your Students in Astronomy: Common Read Assignment**

**Book Title: “How I Killed Pluto, and Why it Had it Coming”, by Mike Brown**

Below are several questions that reflect that major themes in the book, and they refer to large parts of the reading, rather than specific sections.  Our team wrote the questions to help you to examine how a practicing planetary scientist looks at the Solar System and approaches designing and carrying out astronomical experiments.  Moreover, these questions can also serve as a model for use with your students.

1. **Why did objects like Eris elude astronomers between the 1930s and early 2000s?**

1. **In what way did Brown’s team improve upon past searches in order to make their sequence of exciting discoveries?**
2. **The author spends a great deal of time discussing why Pluto (and Eris) should not be considered planets.  Do you agree with his assessment?  Why or why not?**

1. **The central idea of the book is the definition of a planet.  How would your students define a planet?**

1. **Definitions are given in textbooks in their “finished form.”  How does the Brown book differ from this approach?  How could this approach work in your classroom?  What difficulties would it present?**

1. **Teachers often ask astronomers and other scientists for resources related to scientific careers.  Is there anything in Brown’s description of his work that might be interesting to students considering science as a career?  Could this book be used in any way in a lesson on science careers?**
2. **Another part of the story deals with the actions of astronomers who Brown alleges were unethical in announcing their own discovery of large Kuiper Belt objects.  Is this story appropriate for inclusion in a science classroom?  If so, how might you present it?**

1. **Most curricula about the Solar System only include the planets. What advantages do you see to including all of the rest of the objects in your own curriculum?**
2. **Chapter one of most textbooks is about the scientific method. How does the science in the book affirm and differ from this textbook approach?  Where in your science curriculum do you address how science is done?**