

The Wonders of Greenland Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Most people imagine islands to be full of tall green trees, hot beaches, and the noisy cacophony of birds and monkeys. Greenland, the largest island in the world, is far from the tropics. In fact, Greenland is so far north that it nearly reaches the North Pole.

Greenland's extreme location causes its natural features to be dominated by its cold and icy climate. Most of the island's southern coast is lined with mountainous areas that reach temperatures above freezing only in the summertime. These areas are the only places humans, both from Europe and North America, have been able to settle. The northernmost part of Greenland is very cold, but the ground is bare because the air is too dry to produce snow. The inner portion of the island is dominated by an immense ice cap. Ice caps are massive areas of land that are covered in dense ice. This particular ice cap has been in the middle of Greenland since the end of the last ice age 11,000 years ago. Little life exists on this enormous expanse of ice, but that does not mean the ice cap is not important. The ice cap in Greenland stores incredible amounts of fresh water in solid form. If released into the oceans, the Greenland ice cap could cause sea levels to rise all around the world.

Some pieces of the ice cap enter the ocean through the Ilulissat Icefjord. This is an area on the coast where fast-moving glaciers jut out into the sea as they move away from the ice cap. Glaciers are enormous mobile mounds of ice that can carve through the land as they travel. At the Icefjord, the glaciers move violently into the ocean so quickly that the sounds of the ice sliding and creaking can be heard from far away. Chunks of ice periodically crack off of the glaciers and fall into the water with deafening crashes. This process is called calving and can create massive waves as tall as a house.

For all of its wild glacial beauty, Greenland is also home to one of the most beloved sights of northern skies: the aurora borealis, or northern lights. The aurora borealis occurs in extreme northern latitudes due to interactions of light particles with the magnetic field of the nearby North Pole. Because Greenland is so remote, there is little light pollution to distract from the brilliance of this colorful light display. Despite its isolated location, the unique wonders of Greenland have attracted scientists and adventurers for many years.

1.) Based on the following sentence, what could be the meaning of the word “cacophony”?

Most people imagine islands to be full of tall green trees, hot beaches, and the noisy cacophony of birds and monkeys

- a.) a loud chorus of noises
- b.) movements between trees
- c.) a large group of animals
- d.) a time of day in which animals are very active

2.) Which is not a feature of Greenland’s landscape?

- a.) It is entirely flat
- b.) A large icecap in the center of the island
- c.) Bare ground in the northernmost part of the island
- d.) Glaciers at the Ilulissat Icefjord

3.) Which is TRUE about the icecap?

- a.) This is the last area in the world where ice age animals can live
- b.) Many animals call this part of Greenland home
- c.) The ice cap is a source of the fresh water you can buy in bottles in grocery stores
- d.) The ice cap holds so much water that sea levels would rise if the water were released

4.) What happens at the Ilulissat Icefjord?

- a.) Ice from the sea freezes and joins the ice cap
- b.) Fast-moving glaciers slide towards the ice cap in the center of the island
- c.) Glaciers jut out into the sea and blocks of ice calve off
- d.) Massive waves cut pieces of ice off of glaciers

5. In the following sentence, which adverb could be used to replace “violently” to keep the meaning of the sentence the same?

At the Icefjord, the glaciers move violently into the ocean so quickly that the sounds of the ice sliding and creaking can be heard from far away

- a.) harmfully
- b.) eagerly
- c.) forcefully
- d.) effortlessly

6. Based on the following sentence, what could be the meaning of the word "periodically"?

Chunks of ice periodically crack off of the glaciers and fall into the water with deafening crashes

- a.) slowly
- b.) loudly
- c.) smoothly
- d.) regularly

7. Which of the following is not a "Wonder of Greenland"?

- a.) The Greenland ice cap
- b.) Unique plants and animals of the ice cap
- c.) The calving of ice at the Ilulissat Icefjord
- d.) The aurora borealis