

Name _____

A Few Facts about Antarctica

Antarctica is the continent that surrounds the South Pole, the southernmost point at the bottom of the earth. Antarctica is a continent because it is land that is covered by a thick layer of ice. The area surrounding the North Pole at the northernmost point or top of the earth is called the Arctic. The Arctic is not a continent; this area of the earth is mostly ocean, the Arctic Ocean, which is covered with ice. Antarctica is a giant island that is surrounded by the Southern Ocean. The Southern Ocean is made up of the southern portions of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.



The Arctic is the home of polar bears and Antarctica has several species of penguins. Made-up stories and cartoons have penguin characters at the North Pole or polar bears at the South Pole but these tales are not correct in real life. There are species of penguins that live outside of Antarctica but none that live in the Arctic. Humboldt penguins of South America live on the Pacific Ocean side of the continent from the southern tip almost up to the equator. A species called little penguins live on the southern coast of Australia near the Southern Ocean but no penguins live north of the equator.



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Antarctica is the world's coldest continent where the average winter temperature is -74° F and the average summer temperature remains below zero at -26° F. The Antarctic Peninsula stretches away from the main part of the continent and the tip of the peninsula is just 600 miles from South America. This part of Antarctica is warmer with an average winter temperature of 7° F and a summer temperature of 30° F.

Antarctica is the windiest place in the world and is the windiest continent. During severe storms the wind speed can reach 200 miles per hour, windier than the worst hurricane that the United States has ever seen. Antarctica is the world's highest continent. Parts of the U.S. Midwest have an elevation of just 600 feet and Mount Mitchell is the highest of the Appalachian Mountains at an elevation of 6,684 feet. Antarctica has an average elevation of 7,500 feet that is then covered by a thick layer of ice.



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Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Where is the North Pole located?
 - a. Iceland
 - b. Arctic
 - c. Antarctica
 - d. None of the above

2. Where is the South Pole located?
 - a. South America
 - b. Arctic
 - c. Antarctica
 - d. None of the above

3. The Southern Ocean touches which other ocean?
 - a. Atlantic
 - b. Pacific
 - c. Indian
 - d. All of the above

4. Where do penguins live?
 - a. Only in Antarctica
 - b. Only in the Southern Hemisphere
 - c. Only in the Arctic
 - d. Only in the Northern Hemisphere

5. The closest continent to Antarctica is
 - a. Asia
 - b. Africa
 - c. Australia
 - d. South America

6. Antarctica is the windiest continent with a maximum wind speed of more than
 - a. 50 mph
 - b. 100 mph
 - c. 150 mph
 - d. 200 mph



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Short Answer Questions

1. Locate the following places on a map of the world: North Pole, South Pole, Arctic, Antarctica, South America, and Southern Ocean.
2. Emperor penguins get that name because they are so tall and because they seem to be wearing a tuxedo. Do some research and write a short report about how emperor penguins take care of their chicks.
3. Do some research and write a short report about the species called little penguins. Include in your report why they are called little penguins.
4. Looking only at averages, does the temperature in Antarctica ever get above freezing? Explain your answer.
5. What do you think would happen if a major city like New York, Chicago or Los Angeles experienced a 200 mph wind for three days in a row?
6. Use the information in the reading to create a graph that compares elevations.
7. Researchers study at Antarctica during the summer. Only a few researchers stay over the winter. With a team of your classmates, do some research of your own and find out what researchers are studying in Antarctica.



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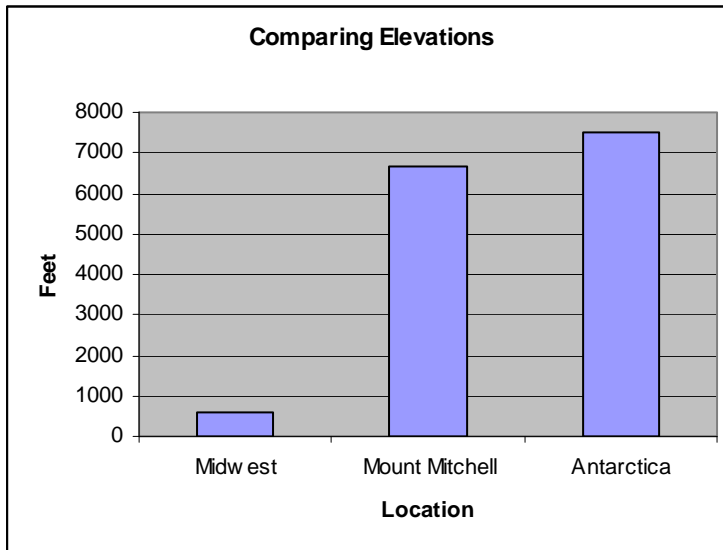
Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. c.
3. d.
4. b.
5. d.
6. d.

Short Answer

1. Individual response
2. Individual response
3. Individual response
4. Even the average high temperature in the warmest part of Antarctica is below 32° F which is freezing.
5. Individual response
- 6.



7. Individual response

