

LEVELED BOOK • M

# Amazing Antarctica

MULTI  
LEVEL  
J•M•P

Written by Sean P. McCollum

# Amazing Antarctica



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## Focus Question

How does Antarctica compare  
to other continents?

## Words to Know

continents  
globe  
predator

protect  
research  
scientists

Title page: Giant icebergs float throughout the waters of Antarctica.

Page 3: Tourists come close to one of Antarctica's icebergs.

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**Correlation**

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## The Seventh Continent

Give a **globe** a spin.

On it you can easily find six continents: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America.

Now look at the bottom of the globe. There you will find continent number seven: Antarctica.



In February 1915, the crew of British explorer Ernest Shackleton works to free their ship from Antarctica's ice.

For a long time, no one knew Antarctica was there. It was located far from where anyone lived. People did not discover Antarctica until about two hundred years ago.

Since then, we have learned a lot about Antarctica.

## Antarctica



### SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

**Vinson Massif**  
4,897 m (16,066 ft.)  
Tallest mountain  
on Antarctica

• **South Pole**  
Earth's  
southernmost  
point

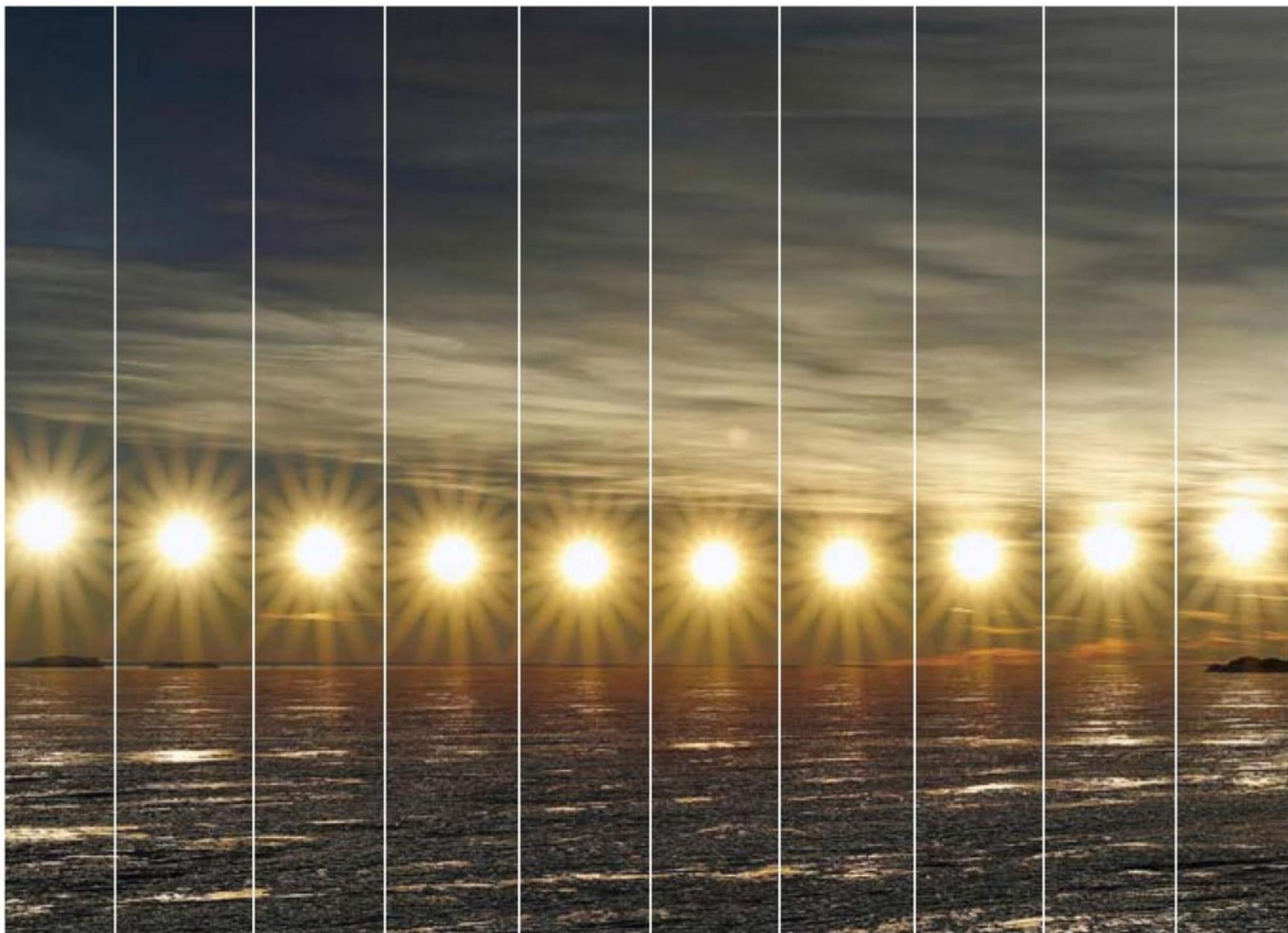
### SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

**Ross Ice Shelf**  
Floating area of ice  
the size of France

### INDIAN OCEAN

0 500 1000 1500 2000 km  
0 200 400 600 800 1000 1200 mi.

Antarctica is the coldest continent and has the strongest winds. Less rain and snow fall there than in any other continent. Antarctica is also home to some of the most amazing animals in the world.



These pictures taken at midnight show that the Sun never sets in December. It is summertime in Antarctica then.

## Freezing Antarctica

During the winter, Earth's southern half is turned away from the Sun. For a couple of weeks in June and July—winter in Antarctica—the Sun never rises. For a period in December and January—summer in Antarctica—the Sun never sets. Its location makes the weather almost always cold, icy, and windy.



When a snowstorm blows through Antarctica, it can be hard to tell the difference between sky, mountain, and sea.

The temperature in summer is usually just above 0°C (32°F). In winter, the temperature often drops below –18°C (0°F). The coldest known temperature on Earth was in Antarctica in July 1983. It was about –89°C (–128°F).

This cold explains why thick sheets of ice cover much of Antarctica. In some places, Antarctica's ice is more than 4 kilometers (2.5 mi.) thick.



Icebergs are large pieces of ice that break off and float out to sea.

With all that ice, it might seem surprising that Antarctica is also the driest continent. It gets less than 5 centimeters (2 in.) of rain and snow each year.

Water covers most of Earth's surface, but it is mostly salt water. Most of Earth's fresh water is frozen in Antarctica's ice. The ice has built up over many thousands of years. This happens because snow doesn't melt completely during the summer.



Antarctic hair grass grows mostly in rocky areas.

## Life on and Around Antarctica

The cold, icy, windy conditions have made Antarctica a dangerous place. Only low plants, such as moss, grow on the continent. No trees grow there. Antarctica has only one native insect.



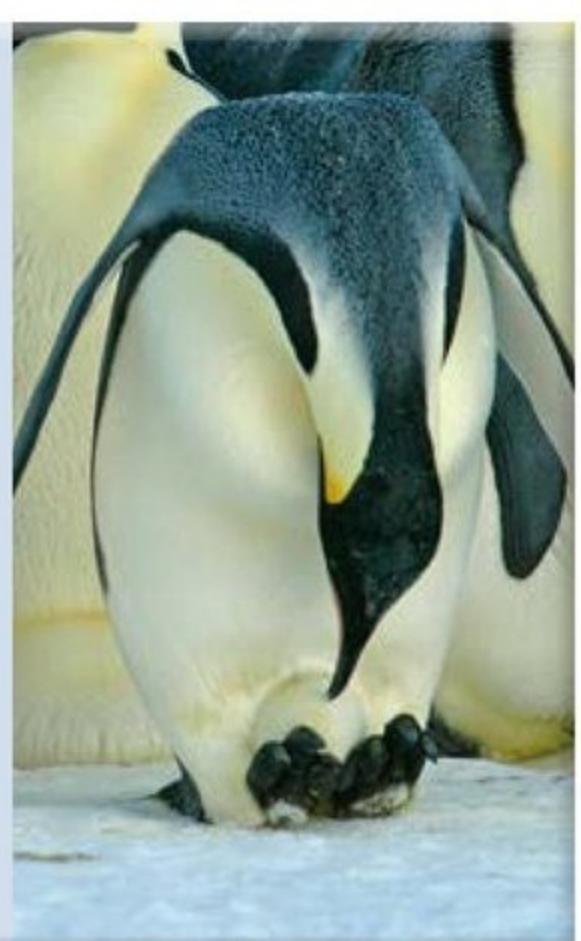
A giant leopard seal yawns on a chunk of ice.

Almost all plant and animal life on Antarctica is found near the coasts or in the sea. Among the creatures that call Antarctica's icy waters home are emperor penguins—the biggest penguin in the world.

The leopard seal, a fierce predator of the penguin, also lives in the sea.

### Wowser!

A male emperor penguin has a big job when it comes to a baby penguin. It stays on ice and holds an egg between its feet and body for two months. It does not eat and loses almost half of its weight. If the chick hatches before the mother returns, the father stays with the chick. Once the mother comes back, she feeds the chick. The father can finally go to the sea to eat.





Blizzards often keep the scientists who live at Australia's Mawson Station indoors. They read, watch movies, or explore the indoor climbing wall.

## A Playground for Scientists

People around the world have worked hard to **protect** Antarctica's animals and land.

Many countries send **scientists** to Antarctica to do **research**. Some are there all year, even in winter. Others are only there in summer.

### Do You Know?

No one country is in control of Antarctica. In 1961, many countries signed an agreement called a *treaty*. It makes sure no wars happen in Antarctica so scientists can study there.



Scientists study an emperor penguin chick as part of their work at Italy's Mario Zucchelli Station.

Many kinds of scientists come to Antarctica to work. Some study its animals. For example, some scientists study what penguins eat.



Scientists drill into ice to study what the weather in Antarctica was like long ago.

Other scientists study Antarctica's ice. They learn about how the ice has changed.

Thousands of other people also visit Antarctica each year.



Colorful clouds fill the sky above Antarctica.

## Conclusion

Antarctica is one of the least-known lands in the world. The cold, ice, and rough seas make it a difficult place to explore and study. However, it's a place of amazing beauty and an important place to protect.

## Glossary

<b>continents</b> (n.)	the main sections of land on Earth, including Africa, South America, Asia, Europe, North America, Australia, and Antarctica (p. 4)
<b>globe</b> (n.)	a ball-shaped map of the world (p. 4)
<b>predator</b> (n.)	an animal that hunts and eats other animals (p. 11)
<b>protect</b> (v.)	to guard or keep from harm or danger (p. 12)
<b>research</b> (n.)	a detailed study of a subject, especially to discover new information or to find facts (p. 12)
<b>scientists</b> (n.)	people who work in or study one or more fields of science (p. 12)

# Amazing Antarctica

A Reading A-Z Level M Leveled Book

Word Count: 494

## Connections

### Writing

Pretend you are a scientist studying Antarctica. Use the facts in the book to write a journal entry about what you see and do in a day.

### Science

Learn more about emperor penguins. Make a poster about them that includes words and pictures.

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