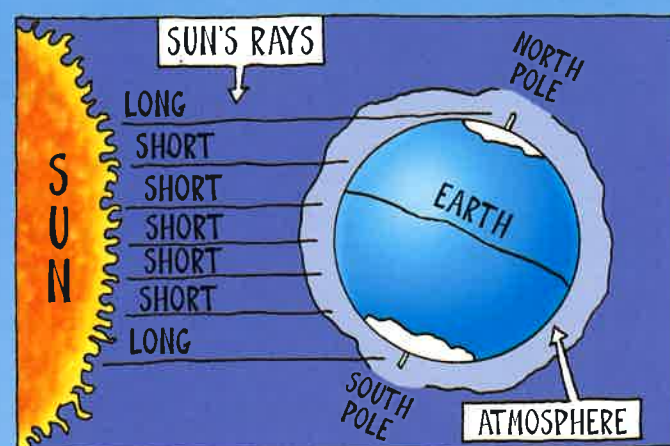


COLD POLES

Reckon the northern forests are plenty nippy enough for you? Well, get ready for a fearfully frosty surprise. For our next stop, we're off to the p-p-perishing poles. They're the parkiest places on the planet, and they're covered in miles and miles of snow and ice. Think you'll be able to keep your cool?

Polar weather report

It's bitterly cold at the poles. Get this – at the South Pole, the average winter temperature's a teeth-chattering -60°C . It's warmer at the North Pole, though it's still a chilly -30°C . And to make matters worse, it's also horribly windy, with gales howling at speeds of over 300 km/h and whipping the snow up into blinding blizzards. No wonder you're getting cold feet. What's that? Why are the perishing poles so cold? It's a very good question. Here's a handy diagram.



Perishing polar cold

The poles are so bitterly cold because the Earth's surface is curvy. How on Earth does this curve cause the Earth to catch cold? What happens is this. Because of the Earth's curve, the Sun's rays hit the poles at a wide angle. They're spread out over a wide area, which makes them woefully weak. What's more, the roving rays have to take a longer route through the Earth's atmosphere. On the way, they lose heaps of heat. The ice at the poles also helps them keep their cool. Light colours reflect heat away while dark colours soak it up. So, most of the sunlight that reaches the poles is reflected straight back into space by the white ice.

WICKED WORLD FACTS

There's no land at the North Pole, only frozen ocean.

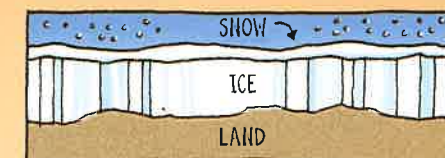
Antarctica's actually a colossal ice-covered continent.

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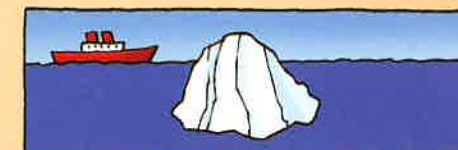
FIVE FROSTY FACTS

1 A massive sheet of ice covers 99 per cent of Antarctica. In places, this gigantic ice slice is a staggering 5 km thick. And it's so heavy, the land's sunk beneath its weight.



2 Every year, thousands of icebergs break away from slippery ice sheets and glaciers and float out to sea. Baby bergs are about as big as pianos. The biggest berg ever seen was the size of Belgium! By the way, icebergs make brilliant penguin diving boards.

3 Two-thirds of an iceberg lies underwater, which makes it hard for ships to spot. In 1912, the luxury liner, RMS *Titanic*, hit a berg in the North Atlantic and sunk with the loss of 1,490 lives.



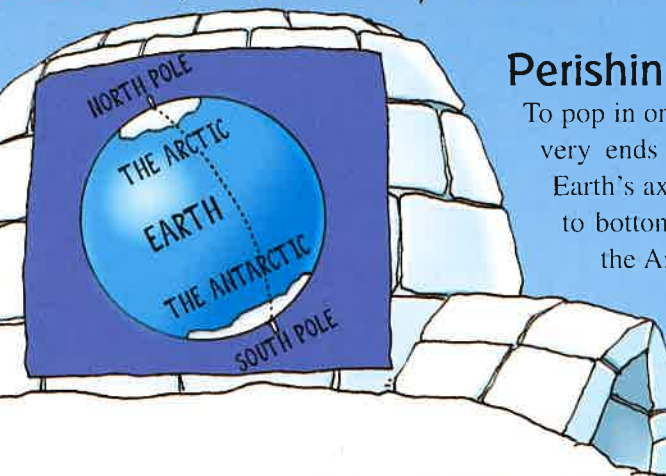
4 A bit further north, the freezing Arctic Ocean is covered in ice almost all year round. This sea ice is about 5 metres thick.



5 In places, the Arctic sea ice breaks into bits that drift on the wind and ocean currents. These pieces make perfect perches for polar bears, as they float out to sea in search of seals.

Perishing polar map

To pop in on the perishing poles, you'll need to go to the very ends of the Earth. They're at either end of the Earth's axis (that's an imaginary line running from top to bottom). The area around the North Pole is called the Arctic. Antarctica is the area around the South Pole. Got all that?



Earth-shattering fact

Strictly speaking, icy Antarctica counts as a desert. Even though it's so cold. With a measly 50 mm of rain a year, it's as dry as a load of old bones.

YOU MIGHT BUMP INTO A POLAR BEAR AT THE NORTH POLE BUT YOU WON'T FIND ANY PENGUINS. WE ONLY HANG OUT AROUND THE SOUTH POLE.



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