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Huge Iceberg on the move

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TO THE TEACHER

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Level 1, 2024/2025: Issue 6

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WHAT IN THE WORLD? © is published eight times during the school year by:

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Please let us know if you or a colleague would like to receive a complimentary sample of any of our publications.

HAY'SXW'QA!

LesPlan is grateful to the Lkwungen Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose unceded land we now live, and do our work.

We welcome your comments and appreciate your suggestions. Please contact us at any time.

MISSION STATEMENT

LesPlan Educational Services Ltd. aims to help teachers develop students' engagement in, understanding of, and ability to critically assess current issues and events by providing quality, up-to-date, affordable, ready-to-use resources appropriate for use across the curriculum.

I have had many parents comment to me about how great they think *What in the World?* is, and they look forward to each month's issue coming home... This is a great resource for a small country school to explore the global issues that affect us all.

K. Camelon, Grade 7/8 teacher

Admaston, ON

GET BREAKING NEWS STORIES FREE ONLINE

Articles and supplementary materials for breaking news stories are posted at **www.lesplan.com**.

Download as many as you'd like!

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The amazing voyage of the world's biggest iceberg

BEFORE READING

1. Project the first or second photo from the following link:
https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd64vvg4z6go

2. Ask students to identify what they already know about icebergs.

3. Next, in small groups, have students brainstorm why scientists are interested in icebergs (*e.g., climate change clues, changes to sea levels, wildlife and ecosystems, navigation and safety*) and what possible dangers they might bring (*e.g., hazards to ships, impact on marine life, blocking supply routes, disrupting ocean currents*).

4. Debrief student answers as a group.

5. Finally, invite students to set a purpose for reading the article, referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.

Adelie Penguins (Pygoscelis adeliae) on iceberg. Date 30 December 2008
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adelie_Penguins_on_iceberg.jpg

Science, Technology, and the Environment

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The amazing voyage of the world's biggest iceberg

A monster iceberg is lumbering through the vast waters of Antarctica. The ginormous slab of frozen fresh water, called A23a, has fueled people's imagination around the globe. But it also poses a threat.

Birth of a giant

First, some background. Icebergs form when storms, ocean swells, or collisions with other icebergs produce cracks in an **ice shelf** or **glacier**. These fissures cause chunks of ice to break off in a process called calving.

In 1986, A23a calved from the Filchner Ice Shelf, a large expanse of floating ice at the head of Antarctica's Weddell Sea. A23a is the oldest iceberg in the world and certainly the biggest. At over 3500 square kilometres, it's roughly two-thirds the size of Prince Edward Island.

And it isn't just heavy and wide; it's also incredibly deep, with an average thickness of about 280 metres. To visualize this, imagine an ice block taller than the Eiffel Tower, floating upside down.

But its most staggering statistic is its mass. Scientists say it weighs nearly a trillion tonnes – about the weight of three billion African elephants.

Trapped!

Right after A23a separated from Filchner 39 years ago, it became stuck. Its massive keel, the part beneath the ocean's surface, lodged itself in the shallow waters of the **continental shelf.** There it remained, an immovable ice island, for over three decades.

It might have stayed where it was, slowly melting and shedding ice. But changes were occurring. Constant wind, large waves, and warmer waters gradually eroded the iceberg's base beneath the surface. So in 2020, A23a broke free from its icy prison and began to drift north.

A floating lab

Scientists knew that the big berg could help them understand the behaviour and environmental effects of floating ice islands wherever they occur. So in December 2023, researchers aboard the RRS *Sir David Attenborough,* a British polar research ship, collected water near A23a. These samples offered crucial data on how icebergs influence ocean chemistry and marine ecosystems.

Scientists soon discovered more about the iceberg's unique properties. Researchers found, for instance, that as A23a melts, it releases nourishment for

DEFINITIONS

CONTINENTAL SHELF: seabed around a large landmass where the sea is relatively shallow compared with the open ocean

GLACIER: large area of ice and snow that slowly flows over land

ICE SHELF: a floating sheet of ice that is attached to a landmass

phytoplankton. Phytoplankton play a crucial role in absorbing the carbon dioxide that contributes to climate change. Feeding these tiny plants in this way may help the ocean to **sequester** carbon deep below the surface. This information could teach us how to enlarge natural carbon sinks.

Researchers are also studying how A23a influences the distribution of carbon and nutrients in the ocean to create thriving ecosystems in otherwise less productive areas.

As well, they're figuring out how A23a affects the balance of gases between the ocean and the atmosphere. This knowledge could be crucial for developing more accurate climate models.

The iceberg will likely release lots of mineral dust as it melts. This dust, accumulated over thousands of years in the Antarctic ice sheet, could fertilize the ocean and strengthen the marine food chain.

"In many ways these icebergs are life-giving; they are the origin point for a lot of biological activity," said marine scientist Catherine Walker.

Stuck and unstuck

As A23a traveled, a fascinating phenomenon once again halted its progress. In April 2024, the iceberg entered the Antarctic Circumpolar Current (ACC), one of the strongest ocean currents on Earth.

Normally, this would have swept it quickly northward into warmer waters. But the iceberg became caught in a rotating cylinder of water formed when ocean currents encounter underwater obstacles. Scientists call this a Taylor Column. In this case, the culprit was likely the Pirie Bank, a **seamount** about 100 kilometres wide. The whirlpool captured A23a and caused it to spin in place like a slow-motion ballerina.

For months, A23a rotated, turning about 15 degrees each day. This dance not only delayed the iceberg's journey but also helped preserve it. How? It kept it away from the warmer waters that would quicken its melting.

But in December 2024, it finally broke out of its circular trap. Once again on the move, it continued northward through the **Southern Ocean**.

Downside of A23a

By early March, A23a was about 280 kilometres off South Georgia, a sub-Antarctic island. This 3500-square-kilometre British territory is known for rich biodiversity that includes many penguin and seal colonies.

Now, scientists are concerned. The reason? As A23a nears this wildlife haven, it might block access to feeding grounds. That could pose a threat to local **flora** and **fauna**, disrupt local ecosystems, and alter habitats.

And the iceberg could break into large fragments at any moment. Chunks could drift for years, creating navigational hazards, upsetting fishing operations, and altering global shipping lanes. The last megaberg that reached the island broke up in 2023. It is still hampering navigation.

"All ice is very dangerous, but the bigger it is, the easier it is to find and avoid," explains Simon Wallace, captain of the South Georgia vessel *Pharos*. So smaller ice can be even more hazardous.

An unfolding story

The story of A23a is ongoing. Drifting northwards, it will encounter warmer waters and new currents, evolving to provide new insights into the role of icebergs in the global climate system. Eventually, likely over years, it will break apart.

For now, A23a, a majestic giant on an epic voyage, reminds us of the complex interplay between ice, ocean, and climate. ★

Definitions

fauna: the term for all the animal life in a specific area, time period, or environment

flora: the term for all the plant life in a specific area, time, or environment

phytoplankton: microscopic organisms that live in watery environments, both salty and fresh

seamount: an underwater mountain with steep sides rising from the sea floor

sequester: to keep apart from others; segregate or isolate

southern ocean: the broad ocean region surrounding Antarctica

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The Amazing Voyage of the World's Biggest Iceberg

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is an **iceberg?** How is an iceberg created?

2. List at least three important facts about Iceberg A23a.

3. Describe what happened in the 30 years after it calved.

4. What happened in 2020? Explain why this occurred.

5. Describe what happened to A23a in 2024.

6. Describe what happened to A23a in 2024. What happened in December of last year?

7. Where was the huge iceberg located in early March?

8. Why were scientist concerned? Explain.

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The amazing voyage of the world's biggest iceberg

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. Catherine Walker, from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, is quoted in this article as saying: "***… icebergs are life-giving; they are the origin point of a lot of biographic activity.***" What is your understanding of this quote? Give examples to support your response.

2. An iceberg as large as A23a poses a threat as it moves through the ocean. As you see it, what is the most significant problem caused by a large iceberg? Explain.

3. The article states: "***The story of A23a is far from over. As it drifts northwards, encountering warmer waters and new currents, it will continue to change and evolve.***" What do you suppose scientists might be interested in learning about A23a as it moves north? Give reasons to support your response.

4. A team of 15 Canadian scientists are travelling from Chile to Antarctica this March for a month-long exploration of the southwest Antarctic region. As you see it, what would be the most difficult aspect of this type of mission? What would be the most rewarding aspect?

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The amazing voyage of the world's biggest iceberg

QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

Note: The links below are listed at **www.lesplan.com/links** for easy access.

1. To get an idea of the size of Iceberg A23a, explore these photos and drone footage:
https://www.capturenorthstudios.ca/keep-exploring/photos-and-video-of-a23a-the-largest-iceberg-in-the-world

2. Find out more about where A23a is headed:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH6VxXQd1Lo [2:18]

What is the connection between Iceberg A23a and global warming?

3. Watch this animation showing how A23a compares to some of the world's largest icebergs:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fH6VxXQd1Lo [3:07]

What did you learn?

4. Icebergs originating in Antarctica are named in a specific way. Find out more from this video:
https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/videos/744-naming-icebergs [0:42]

What does the name "A23a" tell us about this iceberg?

5. Learn more about why icebergs are important to arctic ecosystems:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPuHe_FbAJk

List 3 ways icebergs can help ocean animals and plants.

6. Antarctica is a unique continent that is only inhabited by scientists in research stations. Learn more about what scientists do in Antarctica and where they live:
https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/antarctica/

What do you think motivates scientists to work in Antarctica?

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– THE AMAZING VOYAGE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ICEBERG

INFOGRAPHIC

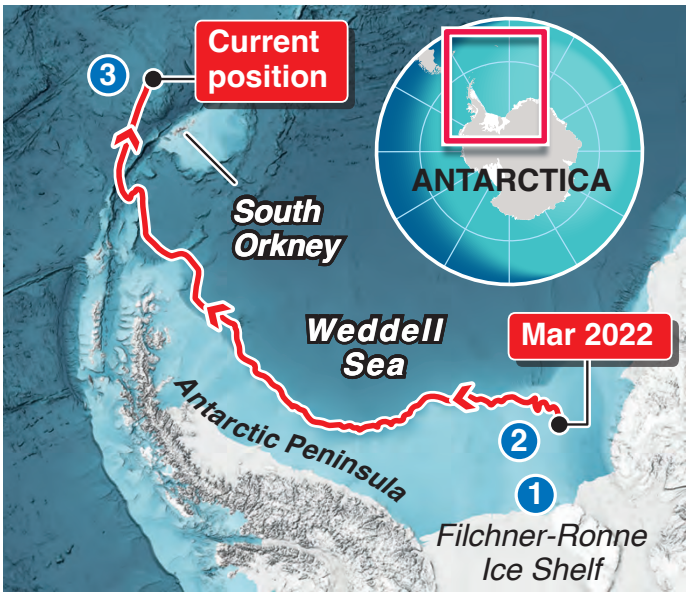
World's biggest iceberg spins in ocean trap

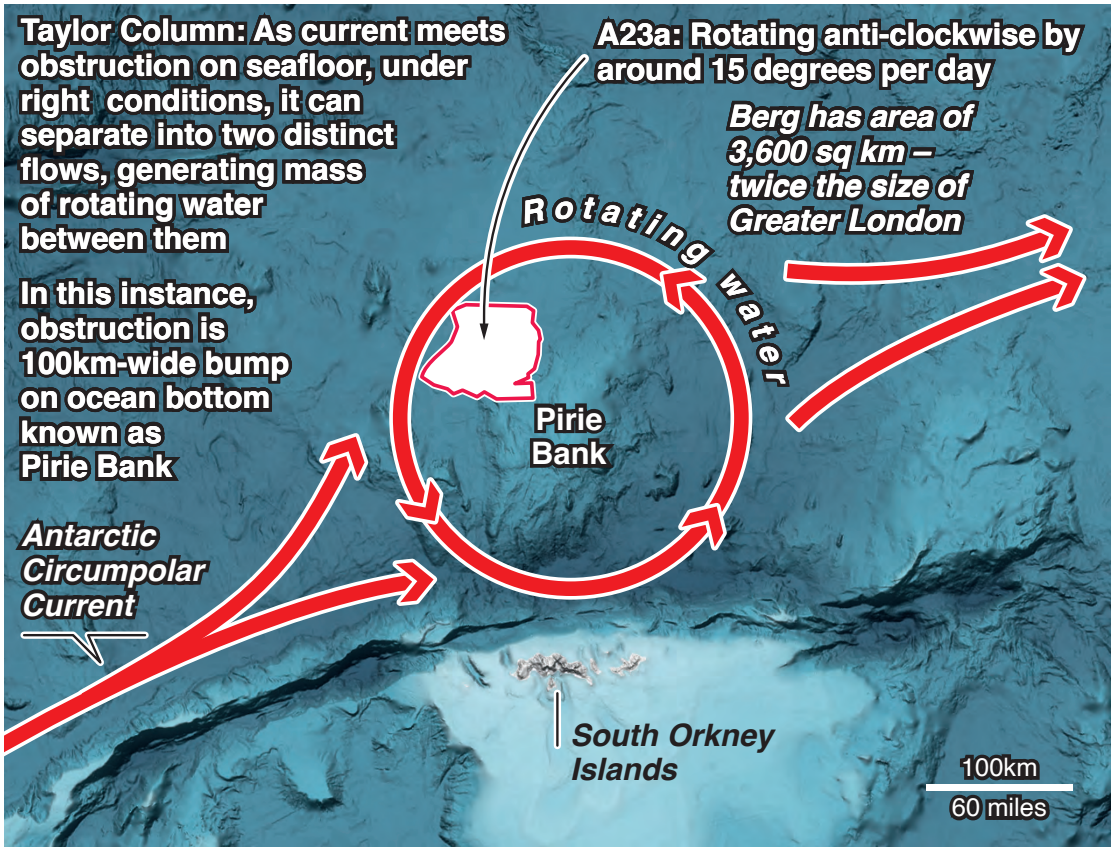
The world's largest iceberg, known as A23a, is captured on a rotating oceanic vortex north of Antarctica that could keep it from melting for years

1 1986: A23a calves off Filchner Ice Shelf, but quickly becomes grounded on sea floor

2 2022: Berg loses grip and starts moving across Weddell Sea

3 Apr 2024: A23a crosses into ***Antarctic Circumpolar Current*** – instead of heading towards warmer waters, it is trapped in ***Taylor Column***, a massive rotating cylinder of water





Sources: BBC, NASA, British Antarctic Survey Pictures: IBCSO © GRAPHIC NEWS

August 6, 2024 - The world's largest iceberg, known as A23a, is captured on a rotating oceanic vortex north of Antarctica that could keep it from melting for years.

A23a broke away from the Antarctic coast in 1986. Almost immediately, it grounded on the seabed and was stuck for more than three decades. In 2020, it refloated.

In early April this year, A23a stepped into the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, but instead of heading towards warmer waters, it became trapped in a type of vortex known as a Taylor Column, a massive rotating cylinder of water.

A Taylor Column forms when a current that meets an obstruction on the sea floor separates into two distinct flows, generating a full-depth mass of rotating water between them.

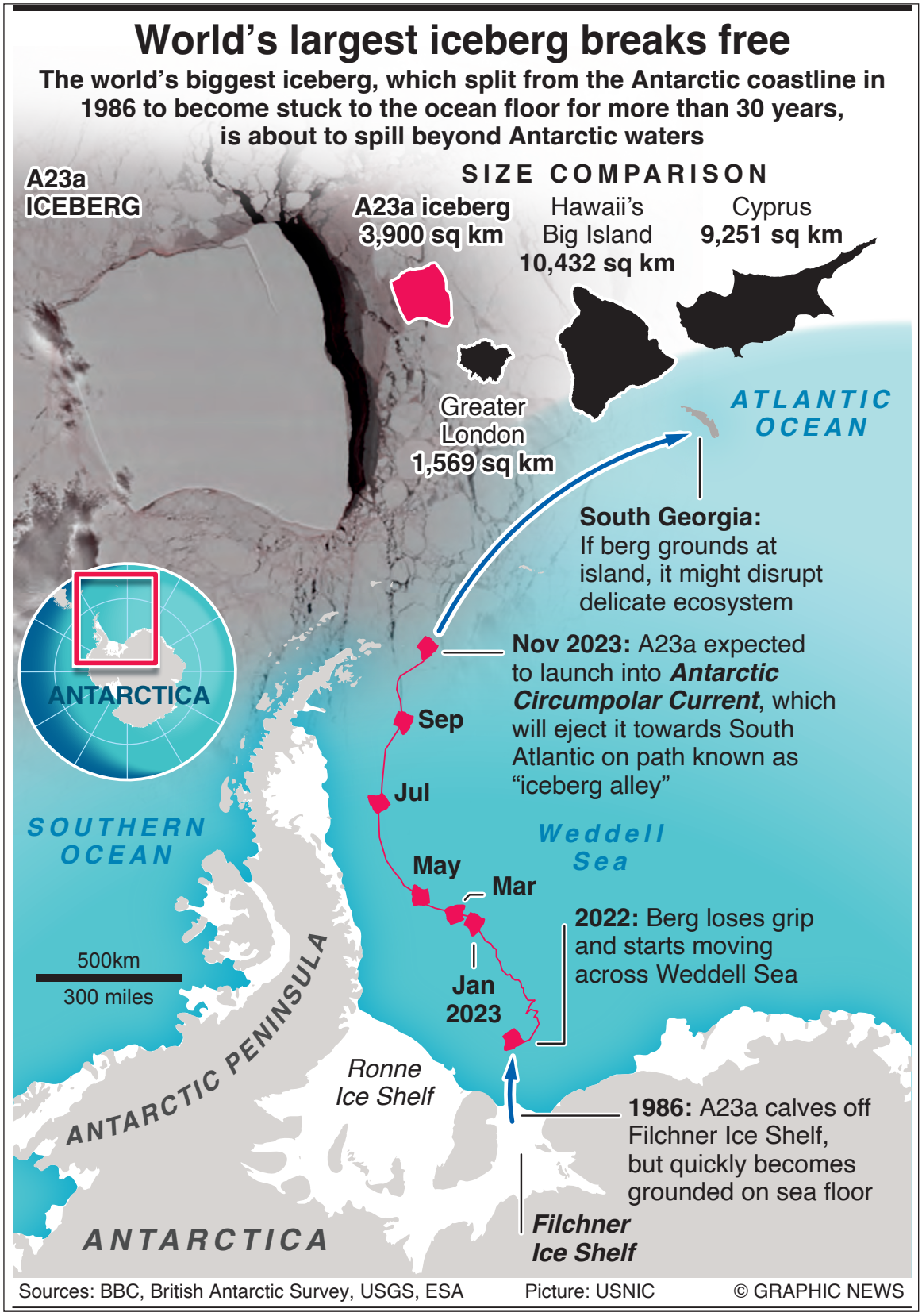
In this instance, the obstruction is a 100km-wide bump on the ocean bottom known as Pirie Bank. The vortex sits on top of the bank, and for now A23a is its prisoner, BBC reports.

A23a, which has an area of 3,600 sq km – twice the size of Greater London – could be stuck for years, scientists say.

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– THE AMAZING VOYAGE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ICEBERG

INFOGRAPHIC



November 24, 2023 - The world's biggest iceberg, which split from the Antarctic coastline in 1986 to become stuck to the ocean floor for more than 30 years, is about to spill beyond Antarctic waters.

The iceberg, called A23a, is almost 4,000 sq km in area, that's roughly three times the size of New York City and more than twice the size of Greater London.

Since calving off West Antarctica's Filchner Ice Shelf in 1986, the iceberg, which once hosted a Soviet research station, has largely been stranded after its base became stuck on the floor of the Weddell Sea.

But in the past year has seen it drifting at speed, and the iceberg is now about to spill beyond Antarctic waters.

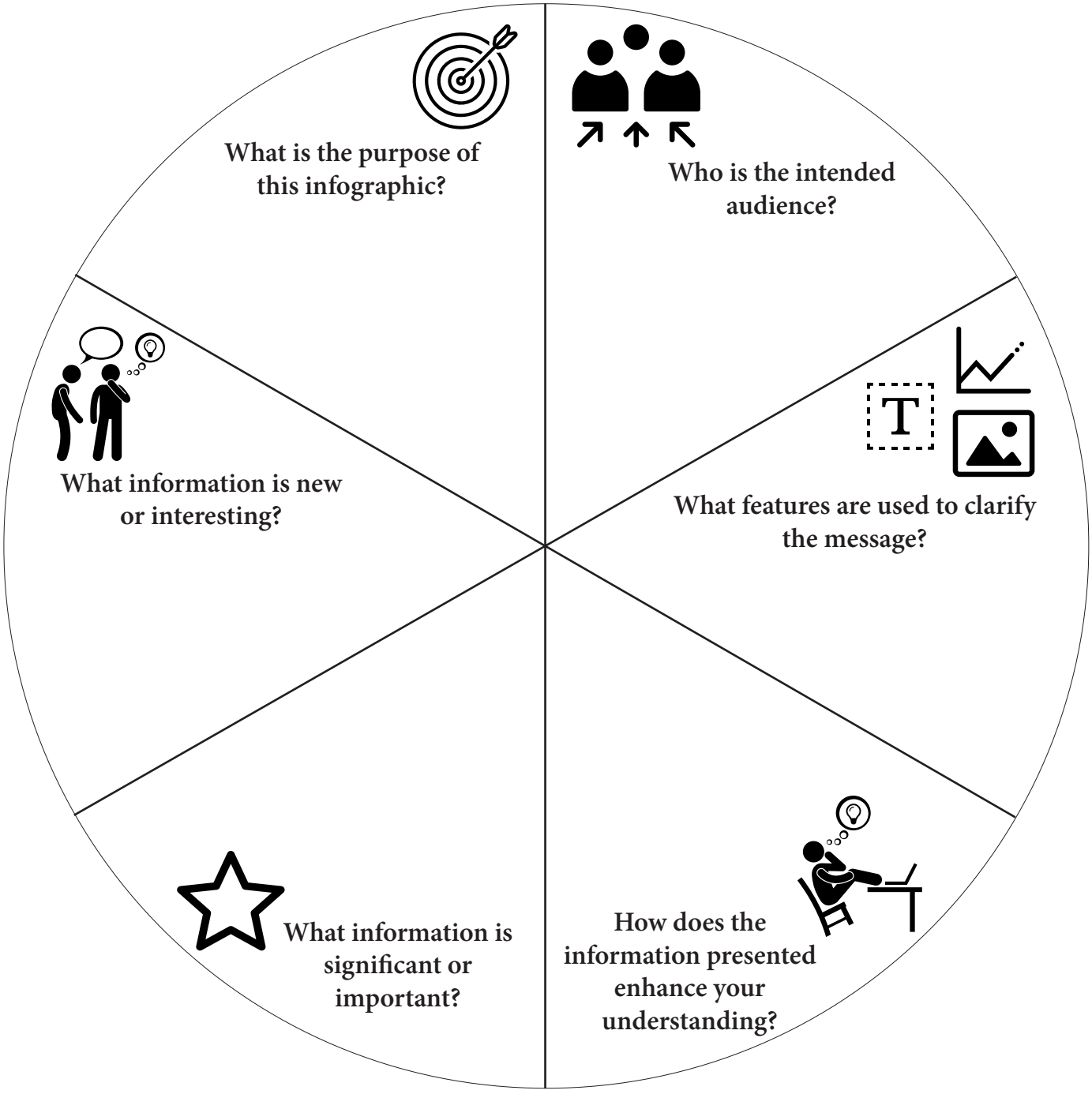
As it gains steam, the colossal berg will likely be ejected into the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, which will throw it towards the South Atlantic on a path known as "iceberg alley" where others of its kind can be found bobbing in dark waters.

It's possible A23a could become grounded at South Georgia island. That might disrupt its delicate ecosystem.

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The amazing voyage of the world's biggest iceberg

ANALYZING AN INFOGRAPHIC



What questions do you still have about the topic presented?

MAP ASSIGNMENT
ICEBERG A23A

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *A Huge Ice Island Is On The Move*.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.

2. Colour your map **after** all labelling is completed.

3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.

4. Work carefully and neatly.

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label the following countries CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

Argentina (purple)
Chile (orange)

Part B Locate and label the capital of each country and underline each city name.

Part C Locate and label the following countries CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

Uruguay (red)
Bolivia (yellow)
Paraguay (pink)
Brazil (green)

Part D Locate and label Antarctica in CAPITAL letters. Do not colour this territory and leave it white.

Part E Locate and label the following islands:

South Georgia Island (UK)
Berkner Island
Falkland Islands [Malvinas] (UK)

Part F Locate and label the following ice shelves and shade them light grey:

Ronne Ice Shelf
Larsen Ice Shelf
Filchner Ice Shelf
Riiser-Larsen Ice Shelf

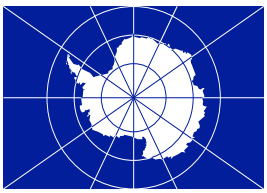
Part G Locate and label the following and shade all salt water dark blue:

Atlantic Ocean
Weddell Sea
Pacific Ocean
Southern Ocean
Drake Passage

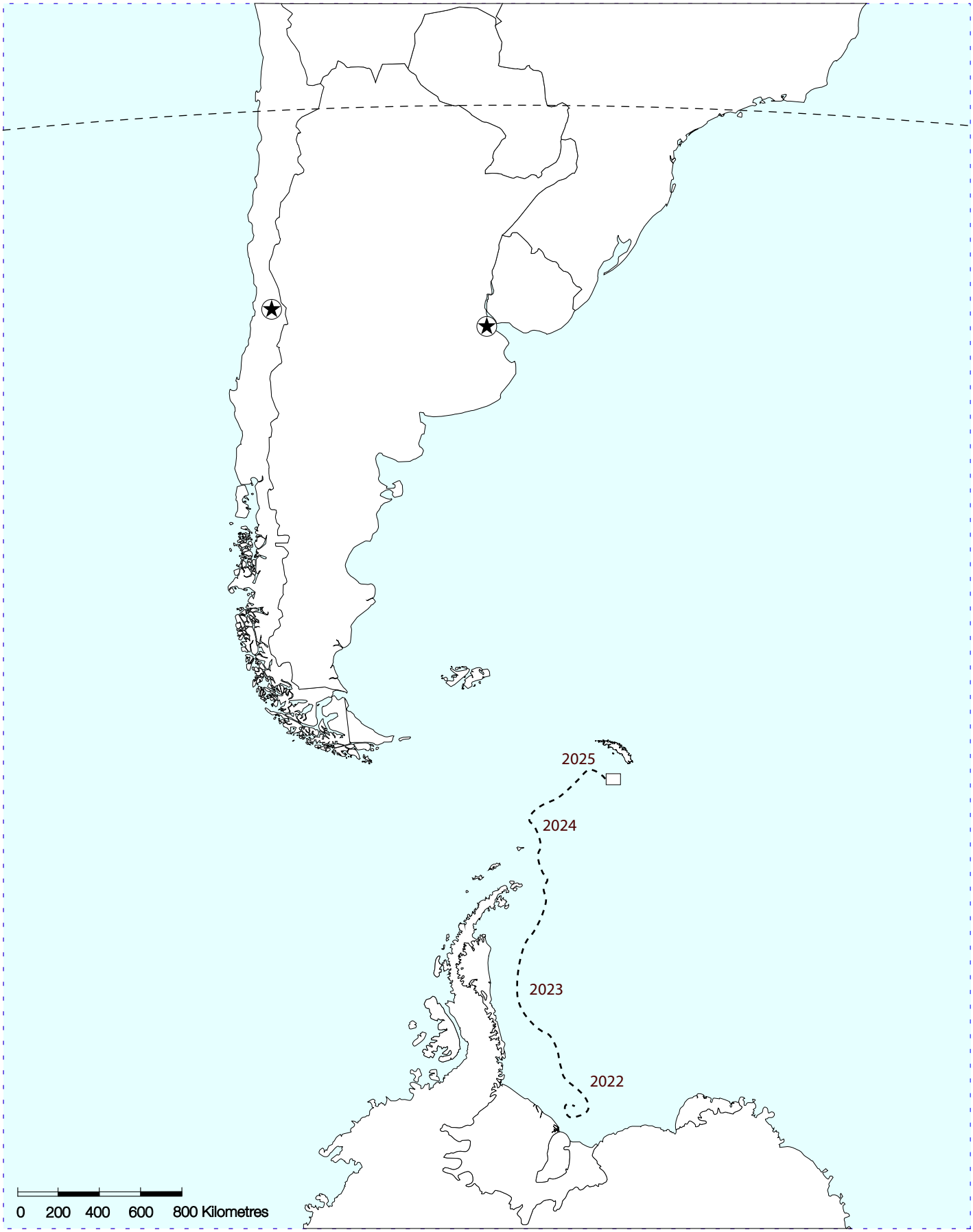
Part H Locate and label Iceberg A23a.

Part I Locate and label the Tropic of Capricorn (23^0 S).

Part J Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★



Antarctic Treaty Flag


2025
2024
2023
2022
0 200 400 600 800 Kilometres

A HUGE ICE ISLAND IS ON THE MOVE

– The amazing voyage of the world's biggest iceberg

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

_____ 1. **When cracks occur in an ice shelf or glacier and a new iceberg is formed, this is called:**
a) birthing b) calving
c) carving d) emerging

_____ 2. **Which ice shelf did A23a break away from?**
a) Filchner Ice Shelf b) Greenland Ice Shelf
c) Antarctica Ice Shelf d) Ronne Ice Shelf

_____ 3. **Last year A23a was caught for eight months in a:**
a) Tidal vortex b) South Atlantic gyre
c) Karman bubble d) Taylor column

B. Mark the statements T (True) or F (False). If a statement is True, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is False, write the words that make it true on the line below.

_____ 4. **True** or **False?** A23a is the oldest and biggest iceberg in the world.

_____

_____ 5. **True** or **False?** A large melting iceberg releases nutrients that nourish the ocean.

_____

_____ 6. **True** or **False?** A23a will be less dangerous to shipping if it breaks into many smaller pieces.

_____

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. The average thickness of A23a is greater than the Eiffel _____ .

8. Last April A23a entered the strong Antarctic Circumpolar _____ .

9. A23a is close to the British sub-Antarctic island of South _____ .

D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. ***(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)***

10. As you see it, are icebergs *more beneficial* or *more detrimental* to the environment and to people? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

RESOURCE PAGE FOR STUDENTS

SETTING A PURPOSE BEFORE READING

There are a number of reasons we read, and setting a purpose for reading – knowing WHY we are reading – helps us to focus on important information and to better understand and remember what we read. It also helps us decide HOW we will read the text.

We don't read all texts for the same purposes or in the same way. For example, we read an instruction manual for a new Blu-ray player for a different reason than we read a book or a website. How we will read it – the strategies we use – will also differ. We are more likely to skim to find the information we need in a manual. Once we find what we need, we might read the instructions carefully to figure out what to do. Then, we stop reading, put the manual down, and carry out the steps. We may have to reread if we get confused or forget what to do.

This is a very different approach than the one we would use to read a book. When we read a book, we usually read cover-to-cover. We read carefully so we don't miss any details because we want to understand the whole story. Sometimes we make connections or create images in our minds as we read to help us better understand what we are reading. Depending on its length, we may put the book down before we finish reading it but we will start reading where we left off.

Good readers are flexible and responsive. This means that they match their reading strategies to their purpose for reading. What types of text do you read? Why do you read them? What strategies do you use to read each of these texts? The chart below is a summary of the main purposes for reading and what each entails.

Purpose for reading	What it looks like
For enjoyment	Usually student-selected. Allows students to choose a variety of genres and forms. Allows students to pursue what interests them while developing reading skills.
To experience something new	Students make connections between their personal experiences and those of people around the world.
To learn more about themselves and others	Students reflect on what they've read and express opinions and perspectives. Students develop a sense of their personal values and make sense of the world around them.
To gain information	Students use the features of informational texts to gather, analyse and apply what they've learned.
To understand issues	Students develop a sense of perspective. Students pose questions, acknowledge other points of view, critique the opinions presented and support opinions with evidence.
To appreciate writing	Students respond to text in ways other than written answers to apply what they've learned in new contexts.
To appreciate use of media to communicate	Students respond to a variety of media formats (e.g., infographics, political cartoons, videos, etc.) and react to how the format supports the meaning of the message.

* Chart adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4-6, p. 11.

Current Events, Clearly Explained

Students want to know what's happening in their world –
but the news can be difficult and time-consuming to teach.

WE HAVE THE SOLUTION. (Five, actually.)

The Canadian Reader

PDF/Word resource

- ✓ Clearly written, leveled Canadian current events articles
- ✓ Literacy-based lesson plans
- ✓ Engaging, original illustrations
- ✓ Comics
- ✓ Map assignments

Product details: 8 issues. 38 pages. Available in English and in French for grades 3 and up (1 reading level).

What in the World?

- ✓ **PDF/Word** resource
- ✓ National and international news stories
- ✓ Key vocabulary
- ✓ Background information
- ✓ Varied assignments that build content-area knowledge and enhance critical thinking
- ✓ Maps and illustrations

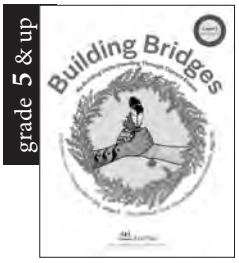
Product details: 8 issues. 60 pages. Available in English and in French, and in 2 reading levels, for grades 5 and up.

Currents4Kids.com
News4Youth.com

- ✓ **Online** and interactive
- ✓ Weekly
- ✓ Auto-graded quizzes
- ✓ Comment page for students to respond to the stories
- ✓ Links to relevant articles, resources, maps, photos and videos
- ✓ Extension activities

Product details: 40 issues. **One subscription** allows all teachers and students access from any Internet-connected device at any time. Available in English and in French. *Currents4Kids/Infos-Jeunes*: Grades 3 and up (1 reading level). *News4Youth/Infos-Ados*: Grades 5 and up (3 reading levels).

Building Bridges



- ✓ **PDF/Word** resource
- ✓ Builds understanding of current events that impact Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians
- ✓ Two theme-based articles and lesson plans
- ✓ Background information
- ✓ Consistent with First Peoples Principles of Learning
- ✓ Encourages a respectful, reflective, empathetic, and inquiring frame of mind

Product details: 5 issues. Variable page length. Available in English and in French, and in 2 reading levels, for grades 5 and up.

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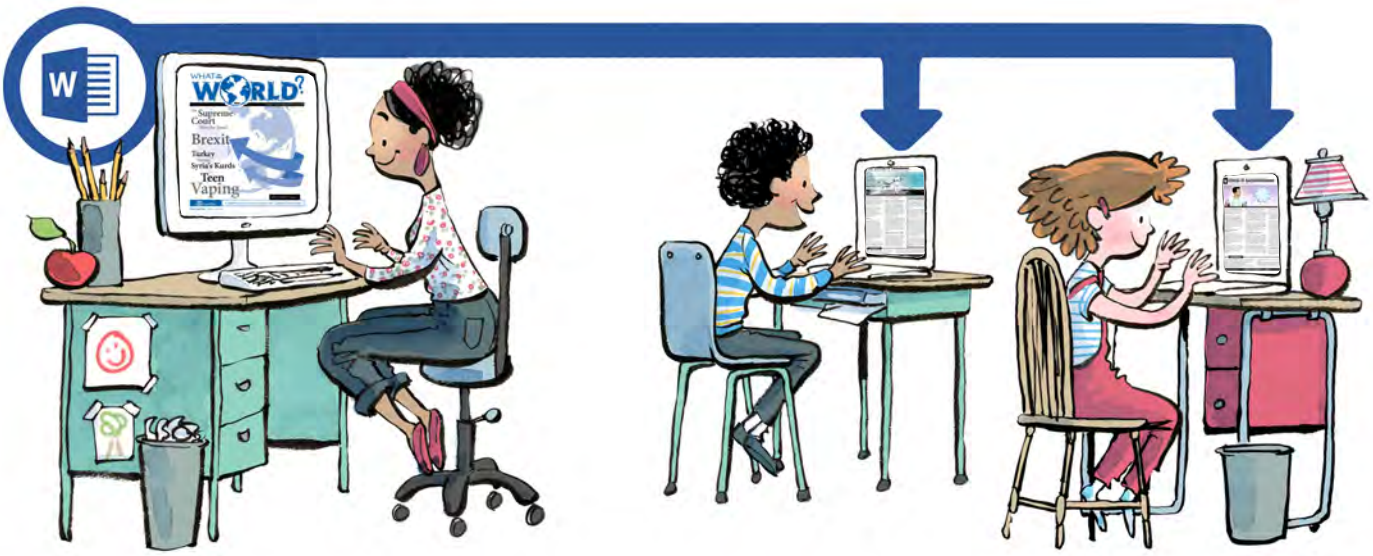
Students Can Work In Word/Google Docs...



Did you know...

. . . that each issue of ***What In The World?*** includes a **PDF** file (**complete document**) and a **Word** file (**articles and questions only**).

Students can complete assignments directly in the **Word** file. Teachers can email the file to students or post it on the Internet. The **Word** file also allows teachers to:

- easily modify and format content including changing **fonts** and text sizes
- create a **PDF** document and use **Adobe Reader's** 'Read Out Loud Mode'
- save paper and copying costs and help protect the environment
- promote and encourage students' computer skills

Data in the Word file

There are **three** ways to access data from a **Word** file:

1) Select the data you wish to **Copy** and then **Paste** it into any word processing program. Use **Select All** to copy the entire document.

2) Import the entire **Word** file into **LibreOffice** (or another similar program) and then save as a new file.

3) Create a new file in a different format. Use the **Word Save As** command to choose: 1) plain text, 2) rich text format (RTF), 3) Web page (.htm), 4) PDF, etc.

Google Docs and LibreOffice

- You can easily upload the **Word** file to **Google Docs** and share it with students or other teachers.
- You can translate a **Google Docs** file into another language *(see Tools>Translate document)* but you will need to edit the document to suit your requirements. **Google Docs** can translate into over 100 languages including Spanish, Mandarin, and German.
- **LibreOffice** is a free alternate to **Microsoft Office** and offers the same functionality. It's easy to install and use. See: www.libreoffice.org

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BIG NEWS
CLEARLY EXPLAINED

SUITABLE FOR GRADES 5 AND UP

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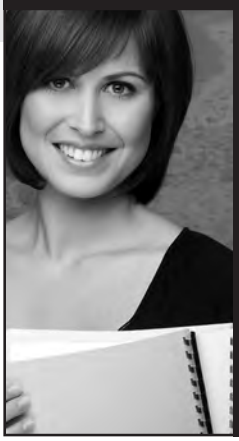

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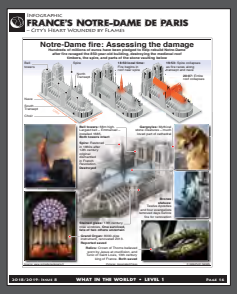

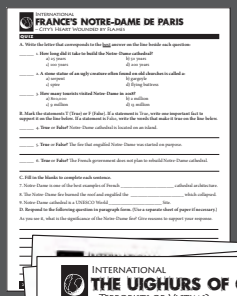

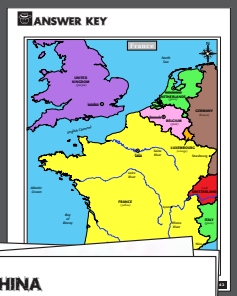

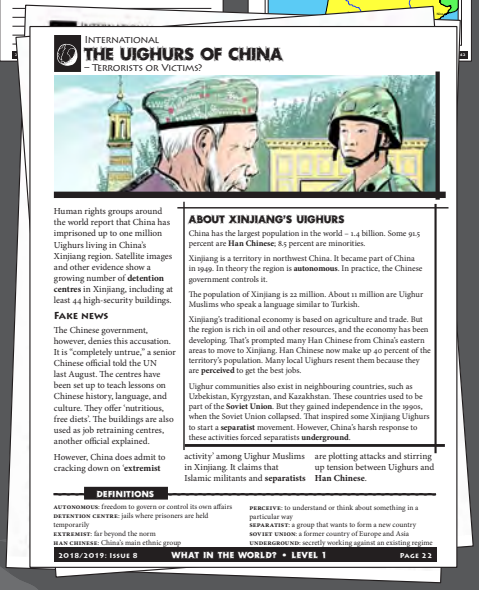

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