Water Under the Ice

Lake Vostok is a strange lake. Nobody fishes or swims there. In fact, no one has ever seen this lake. That is because Lake Vostok is hidden more than two miles under the ice of Antarctica.

About a million years ago, Lake Vostok was a normal lake. It was open to the sky and full of life. Then, as Antarctica cooled, Lake Vostok froze over. Now it is located underneath the coldest place on Earth. The waters of the lake itself did not freeze. Heat from deep inside the earth keeps the lake warm. Today, Lake Vostok is about 140 miles long and 1600 feet deep. It is sandwiched between the bedrock of Antarctica and a thick layer of ice.

Even though the lake is covered with ice, scientists think bacteria still live in it. After the lake was discovered in 1996, Russian scientists drilled within 400 feet of the top of the lake. In ice brought up to the surface, they found 200,000-year-old bacteria that were still alive. Many people would love to explore Lake Vostok, but no one wants to let bacteria from the surface get into the lake waters. The new bacteria might harm life that has survived down there all these years.

GO

13 What keeps Lake Vostok from freezing?

- A Hot air from the surface
- B Warmth from inside Earth
- C Sunlight shining through the ice
- D Living bacteria in its water

14 How deep is the water in Lake Vostok?

- A 400 feet
- B 1600 feet
- C 2 miles
- D 140 miles

15 Scientists cannot explore inside Lake Vostok because —

- A the ice is too thick to drill through
- B there is nothing left alive in the lake
- C their machinery would freeze
- D they want to protect the lake

16 Lake Vostok was not found until 1996 because it is —

- A newly formed
- B small and shallow
- C under the ice
- D in Antarctica

17 What did scientists find in the ice above Lake Vostok?

- A Precious metals
- B Surface bacteria
- C Ancient bones
- D Living things

18 What is another good title for this story?

- A "Life in Antarctica"
- B "An Unusual Lake"
- C "Exploring the Ice"
- D "The Ice of Antarctica"

GO

LIVEWORKSHEETS