Warm-Up 12

Name _____

Ice Ages

You are living in a time between ice ages. Ice ages are periods when Earth is so cold that the polar ice caps grow huge. They can last for millions of years. Such periods have occurred at irregular intervals during the last 2.3 billion years of Earth's history. In the last one billion years alone, there have been four ice ages. One of them lasted one hundred million years.

The most recent ice age was called the Pleistocene Ice Age. It started about two million years ago. It ended just 10,000 years ago. People were alive at that time. Still, it ended about 5,000 years before complex human civilizations began. During an ice age, there are periods of extreme cold called **glacials**. Warmer periods are called interglacials. The Pleistocene Ice Age had seventeen glacials and sixteen interglacials.

The last glacial period was called the Holocene Glacial. It reached its high point about 18,000 years ago. At its height, not only were the North and South Poles covered with ice, but also much of North America, Europe, Tasmania, and New Zealand. Even Hawaii had glaciers.

An ice sheet one mile thick covered what is now London and Washington, D.C. At that time, ice covered about 40 percent of Earth's surface. Melting glaciers dug and filled the Great Lakes. The Great Salt Lake in Utah is a remnant of this last ice age, too.

Check Your Understanding

1. Which of the following was the last glacial period?
a. the Pleistocene
b. the Holocene
c. the Great Lakes
d. today

2. From the context of the passage, what is a **glacial**?
a. an intense cold period when ice forms
b. a warm period between ice ages
c. a period with no ice on Earth
d. a dinosaur period

3. What can you infer about ice ages and the development of complex human societies?
a. Complex human societies only succeed during ice ages.
b. Human societies lived in Washington, D.C., and London during the Holocene Glacial.
c. Complex human societies developed more easily in warm periods of Earth's history.
d. There were no complex human societies before the 18th century.

4. From the context of the passage, which word is an antonym for **glacial**?
a. ice age
b. society
c. glacier
d. interglacial

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