

Reading Booklet

Spring 2018

Key Stage 2 English Reading

Ice Fishing

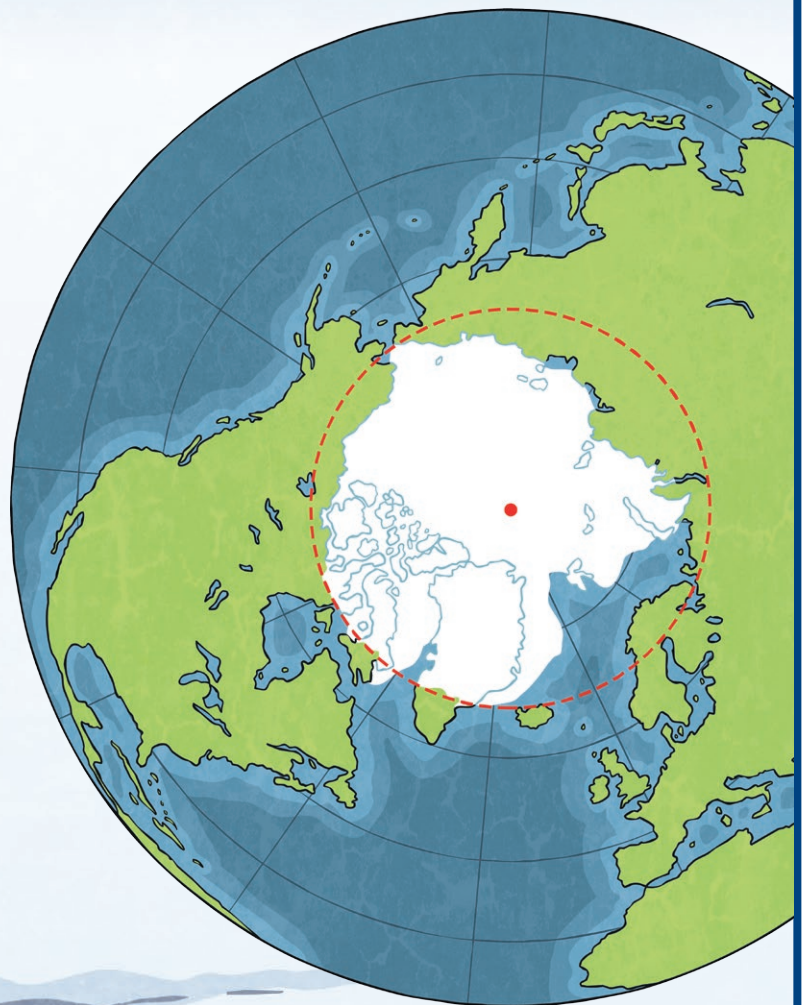
Pages 1-4

Sea Unicorn

Page 5

The Arctic

Pages 6-9



Ice Fishing



Tuktu followed her grandfather over the frozen sea. It had been a long morning searching the ice holes, with only three fish caught. She was tired, cold and hungry—and to make matters worse, the weather was beginning to turn.

“Ataataga, look,” said Tuktu, pointing to the storm clouds rolling in. The sky was vast and heavy; a mixture of dirty dark greys hanging over the purest of Arctic whites. In the distance, she could see movement—a wandering polar bear perhaps. “Ataataga...” she called out again. “Grandfather!”

He stopped and paused before turning to face her.

Tuktu studied her grandfather’s heavily-lined face. His pinprick eyes squinted in the wind as he glared, while frozen beads of ice hung from his beard like tiny baubles. “Ataataga,” she said, “it’s just, we’ve been out all morning... the fish aren’t biting... and the weather, it’s—”

“It’s what?” he said, holding his glare. “Cold?”

Tuktu didn’t know what to say. Her grandfather was a proud man, who was taught in the traditional ways of the Inuit. His skills as a fisherman were legendary. There were tales of him once catching 100 Arctic char in a -40 degree blizzard, and he would always tell about the years when it was so cold the summer melts never came and everyone relied on him to feed the village. But things were changing. The Arctic was warmer than it used to be. In the past, the seas would start to thaw around June-time. It was now April, and the waters had already started to melt. Even hunting and fishing techniques had changed. Modern technology, snowmobiles and motorised boats made it easier to catch fish and get around. It all meant that his skills weren’t seen as useful anymore. Something he found hard to accept.

Her grandfather turned. “Look,” he said. Beyond the snowdrift, sitting on the ice, was the figure of a man next to a snowmobile.

“Hello?” Tuktu called out but the man didn’t move.

“Ai!” her grandfather shouted, as he reached out and patted the man on his shoulder.

“Waaaaghhh!” the man screamed, springing to his feet then slipping on the ice. “Oh, it’s you, Ataataga.”

“What are you doing here, Otok?”

Tuktu’s grandfather snarled. Otok was head fisherman for a company drilling for oil in the area, which was unforgivable in her grandfather’s eyes. But Tuktu couldn’t blame him. There were hardly any jobs and the company paid well. Otok had probably even bought his snowmobile from the money he’d earned.

“Same as you, old timer,” Otok replied. He nodded to a basket behind his snowmobile. It was brimming with freshly caught Arctic char. “Seems I’m having a better day than you,” he added as he nodded towards the three meagre fish hanging on Tuktu’s backpack. He smiled, pulling some wires out of his ears.

“What is this?” Tuktu’s grandfather demanded. “What sort of fishing line do you hang from your head?!”

“Hmm? This?” Otok said, looking amused. “It’s for my mobile phone, you know—for listening to music?”

Tuktu’s grandfather stared blankly back. “And this entices the fish?”

“Wh...? No!” the young fisherman laughed. “It helps pass the time.”

“Pass the time?!” Tuktu’s grandfather spat.

“Hey, you stick to your ancient ways and I’ll stick to my very modern, profitable methods,” the man sneered. “At the end of the day, we can compare catches. Then we’ll see whose method is better.”



“Black waters tell me your way is bad for the Arctic,” Tuktu’s grandfather growled.

“You can’t blame the company for the oil spillage,” Otok said while placing his headphones back in, “the storm came out of nowhere.”

“Tell that to the dead birds,” Tuktu’s grandfather replied.

“Come on, Ataataga,” Tuktu said as she pulled at her grandfather’s arm. “He can’t hear you.”

“An Inuit needs all his senses,” her grandfather grumbled, trudging over to his ice pool.

He bent down and hacked at the frozen water with a long chisel.

Tuktu unwound a line attached to a twig, then tied a silver lure to the end.

“Here,” she said.

Her grandfather held it over the ice pool, dropping the lure into the water. What happened next always amazed Tuktu. The old man would sit for ages, crouched over, occasionally blowing the ice crystals to the side so that he could see better. As soon as a fish came into view, he would make the lure dance and bob with subtle twitches of his wrist. For some reason, the fish found this irresistible and bit into the lure. Only, these days, the fish didn’t seem to want to bite. She looked over to Otok. He was using some sort of electrical gadget, and pulled another fish from his pool.

“Perhaps it’s time to look to the future, Ataataga,” she sighed.

Suddenly, her grandfather dropped the line into the icy waters.

“What’s wrong?” Tuktu said.

“Shh!” he mumbled as he lowered his fur hat and turned his ear to the wind.

Tuktu stared across the frozen sea; behind where Otok was quietly humming to himself.

Nothing but the sound of the wind.

Then she saw it. A small figure at first, blurred against the drifting snow, but growing larger all the time. She narrowed her eyes. Then opened them wide... Bounding towards them, behind the daydreaming Otok, was the largest land carnivore on the planet.

“Nanuk!” her grandfather hissed.

“Polar bear!” Tuktu yelled, but the young fisherman was lost in the sound of his music. “Otok!” She could see the animal clearly now; four huge, powerful paws pounding over the ice, but still Otok didn’t react. Tuktu stepped forward, but her grandfather pulled her back. “Ataataga!” she cried.

“Wait,” her grandfather whispered.

The bear crashed through the ice in an explosion of frothing water and crystals. A ringed seal that Tuktu hadn't noticed flashed across the surface and dived into a nearby pool. The bear rushed towards it, thrashing and splashing as it moved. But the seal was too quick and soon disappeared into the icy depths.

It was at this point that Otok spun around. He backed away and headed for Tuktu and her grandfather, leaving his basket of fish and equipment behind.

The bear pulled itself from the sea and lolloped towards the snowmobile. It sniffed it cautiously, then ripped off the seat with its jaws

“My snowmobile!” Otok whined.

Suddenly, two small cubs appeared from nowhere. They trotted up to their mother and began feasting on Otok's haul of Arctic char.

Within minutes, the entire basketful had been devoured, during which time the mother polar bear had reduced Otok's snowmobile to a pile of broken parts. Then she peered over to the three Inuit and sniffed the air. For a moment, Tuktu thought they might be next on the menu, but then she turned and disappeared into the frozen wastelands; her two cubs tumbling playfully behind.

“Looks like we win,” Tuktu's grandfather smiled while patting Otok playfully on his back. “We have three fish, you have none. Seems we had a better day than you after all.”

The young fisherman looked like he wanted to cry.

“Come on,” Tuktu said reassuringly, “let's go home and eat. There's a spare fish for you, Otok.”

As they wandered home across the Arctic ice, Tuktu thought about the polar bear and her grandfather. They were similar in a way; both hunters struggling to survive in a changing world. She looked up. The grey clouds were even darker now and the temperature had plummeted.

‘Perfect’, she thought to herself, pulling her coat tight. ‘Just how they like it.’



Sea Unicorn

He rises from thick water,
Tusk penetrating through oil,
Into a polar world of black and white,
Alone: a calm, mirrored ocean,
Hiding the darkness within.

He gasps for air in a
fizzled explosion of mist;
Eyes blinded by a dazzling
sun; unshielded and reflecting
off a stained, broken land.

Fish float lifelessly on emulsions of
small bubbles and dark currents;
Destined to drift along
tainted shores already lined with
grease and slick-black feathers.

The narwhal dives;
His intricate tusk guiding
him to cleaner Arctic currents and the
chance of fresh shoals,
Untouched by the poison above.

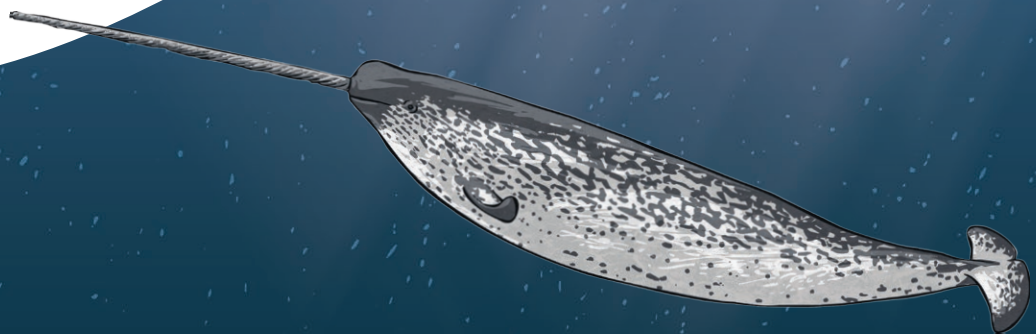
He sings and clicks loudly through
viscous shades; searching for
life in the midnight blue;
Hoping she will
hear his cries.

A distant call—a reply—
Echoes in northern waters
and the narwhal turns and
glides towards the sound,
Under a ceiling of ice.

The clicks increase and
through the murky gloom,
The mottled flank of a fellow narwhal
drifts into view as if
appearing from nowhere.

Tusk-less, and smeared black along her side,
She whistles her relief before leading
him to a gap in the ice;
A layer of darkness
shrouding the daylight above.

He rises from thick water,
Tusk penetrating through oil,
Into a polar world of black and white,
His mother beside him: a calm, mirrored ocean,
Hiding the darkness within.



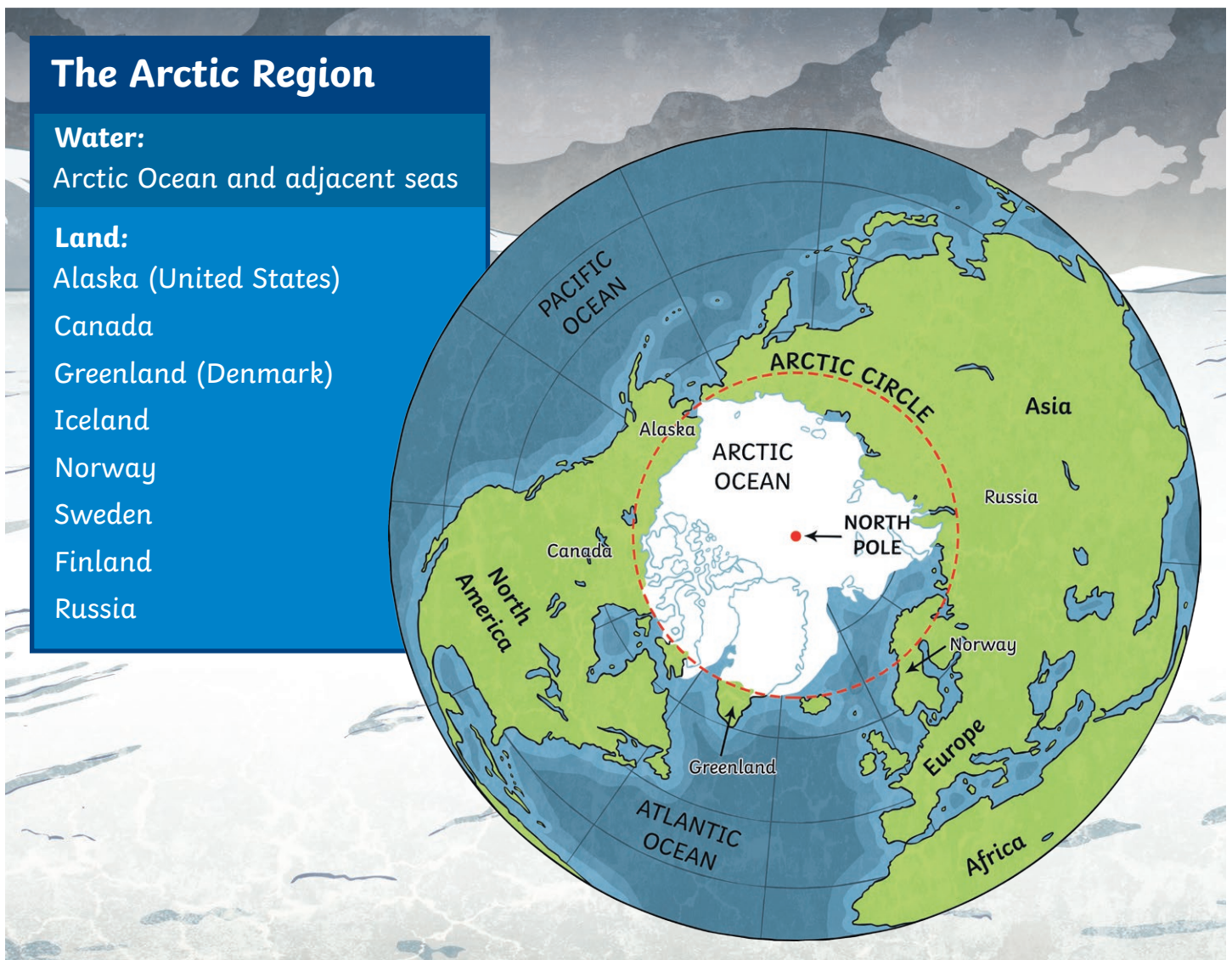
The Arctic

With an area covering more than 5 million square miles (nearly twice the size of Australia), the Arctic is huge. There are all sorts of different landscapes and environments, including mountains, tundra, coastal wetlands, rivers, pack ice, and the sea itself. The Arctic supports an abundant array of wildlife, too. Many of these animals aren't found in any other region on Earth and are perfectly adapted to life on the frozen ice.

Where Is the Arctic?

The Arctic is the northernmost region of planet Earth. It is actually a frozen sea, the Arctic Ocean, surrounded by land, such as Russia, Canada and Finland.

The exact position of the Arctic is hotly disputed amongst scientists. Some say it is any area where the average daily summer temperature doesn't rise above 10 degrees Celsius. Other scientists argue that the Arctic is the zone above the Arctic tree line—the point at which trees and shrubs stop growing. However, most agree it is the region directly above the Arctic Circle (an imaginary line that circles the North Pole).



How Cold Is the Arctic?

The Arctic is seriously cold. Although the summers can be relatively mild (averaging a 'pleasant' 0 degrees Celsius), in winter it can get as low as -40°C ! The lowest recorded temperature is a mind-shivering -68 degrees Celsius!



Arctic Greenland from the air.

How Has Human Activity Affected the Arctic?

Climate Change

The Arctic is a lot warmer than it used to be. In fact, the temperature is increasing at twice the rate of anywhere else in the world. The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels and an increase in carbon dioxide emissions has had a dramatic effect on global climate. This has resulted in warmer seas and melting sea ice, which in turn has caused sea levels to rise throughout the world.

Human activity has also resulted in Arctic waters being more acidic than they used to be. This has harmed zooplankton species like pteropods (transparent sea snails and sea slugs, which are extremely important to the food chain), as well as coral and shellfish.

Drilling for Oil and Gas

Melting sea ice is not the only problem facing the Arctic. There is a lot of oil and gas under the Earth's polar regions and multi-national companies are keen to tap into their riches. We know from past experiences that oil exploration can be damaging to the environment. Almost thirty years ago, an oil tanker called the Exxon Valdez grounded in Alaska, spilling 11 million gallons of oil. This killed hundreds of thousands of birds, fish, marine mammals and other creatures. Even now—two decades on—oil is still leaking into the sea.

Mining

The Arctic is rich with mineral resources, such as copper, gold, and coal, which many companies would like to mine. However, mining produces billions of gallons of toxic waste, which destroys habitats and ecosystems, and negatively impacts upon local people and fishing communities.

Shipping Traffic

Because the water around the Arctic isn't as frozen as it used to be, there has been an increase in ships travelling through it in recent years because it is now easier to navigate. This means greater risks of wrecks, oil spills, noise and pollution.

Animals Under Threat

Polar bears are one of the species that are facing an uncertain future. These huge carnivores—the largest land hunters in the world—rely on the sea being frozen to get around. They roam for miles looking for their favourite meal—seals. Without the ice to stalk their prey, the bears cannot hunt effectively. Pouncing on seals as they rest on the ice is one thing; pursuing them underwater is something completely different. Polar bears are competent swimmers, but no match for an agile seal. As a result, in places where the sheet ice has melted, these magnificent predators are suffering and their numbers are going down. With only 22,000–31,000 polar bears left in the wild, their conservation status is officially 'vulnerable', meaning they are threatened with extinction.



Arctic Animals Most at Risk

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), these Arctic species are threatened with extinction:

<p>Apache Trout (and other Northern Pacific salmon) critically endangered</p>		<p>Conservation Scale</p> <p>extinct—species no longer living.</p> <p>extinct in the wild—extinct in the wild but surviving in captivity.</p> <p>critically endangered—extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.</p> <p>endangered—very high risk of extinction in the wild.</p> <p>vulnerable—high risk of extinction in the wild.</p> <p>near threatened—likely to qualify for threatened category in the near future.</p> <p>least concern—widespread and abundant.</p>  <p>Other Arctic species that are under threat but of least concern, include:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>bowhead whale</td> <td>bear</td> </tr> <tr> <td>grey whale</td> <td>Arctic wolf</td> </tr> <tr> <td>humpback whale</td> <td>Arctic fox</td> </tr> <tr> <td>minke whale</td> <td>Arctic hare</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ringed seal</td> <td>moose</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ribbon seal</td> <td>lemming</td> </tr> <tr> <td>spotted seal</td> <td>willow ptarmigan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>harbor seal</td> <td>snowy owl</td> </tr> <tr> <td>bearded seal</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kamchatka brown</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>(IUCN 2017. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2017)</p>	bowhead whale	bear	grey whale	Arctic wolf	humpback whale	Arctic fox	minke whale	Arctic hare	ringed seal	moose	ribbon seal	lemming	spotted seal	willow ptarmigan	harbor seal	snowy owl	bearded seal		Kamchatka brown	
bowhead whale	bear																					
grey whale	Arctic wolf																					
humpback whale	Arctic fox																					
minke whale	Arctic hare																					
ringed seal	moose																					
ribbon seal	lemming																					
spotted seal	willow ptarmigan																					
harbor seal	snowy owl																					
bearded seal																						
Kamchatka brown																						
<p>Fin Whale endangered</p>																						
<p>Caribou vulnerable</p>																						
<p>Polar Bear vulnerable</p>																						
<p>Northern Fur Seal vulnerable</p>																						
<p>Walrus vulnerable</p>																						
<p>Narwhal near threatened</p>																						
<p>Beluga Whale near threatened</p>																						
<p>Greenland Shark near threatened</p>																						

Photo courtesy of Hafiz Issadeen, changehali, flossyflossam, NOAA's National Ocean Service, USFWS Headquarters, Christopher.Michel, lakpuratravels (@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution