

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ICE CONTINENT

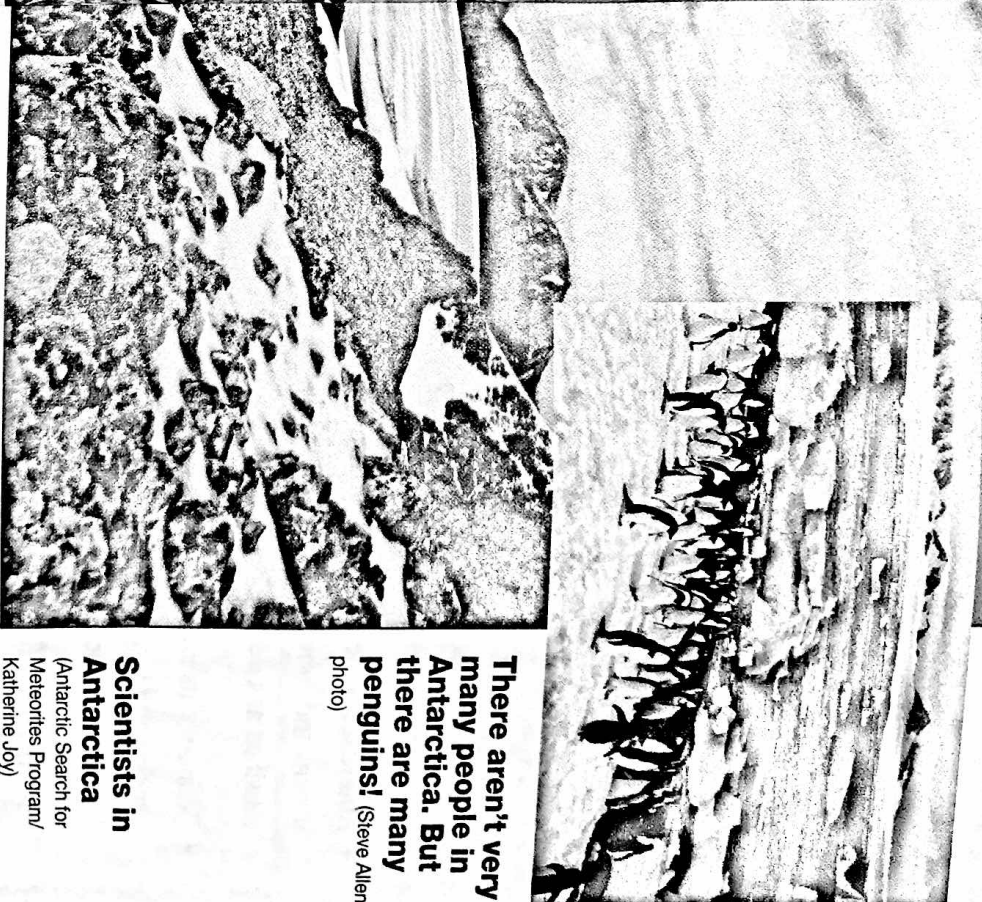


When it comes to continents, Antarctica is the coldest, highest, driest and least **hospitable**. (That means it is the least pleasant and favorable, in terms of climate.)

It is no wonder that whenever people list the continents, Antarctica is often the last one on the list!

Dry, windy and cold

Antarctica is the southernmost continent on earth, the one that

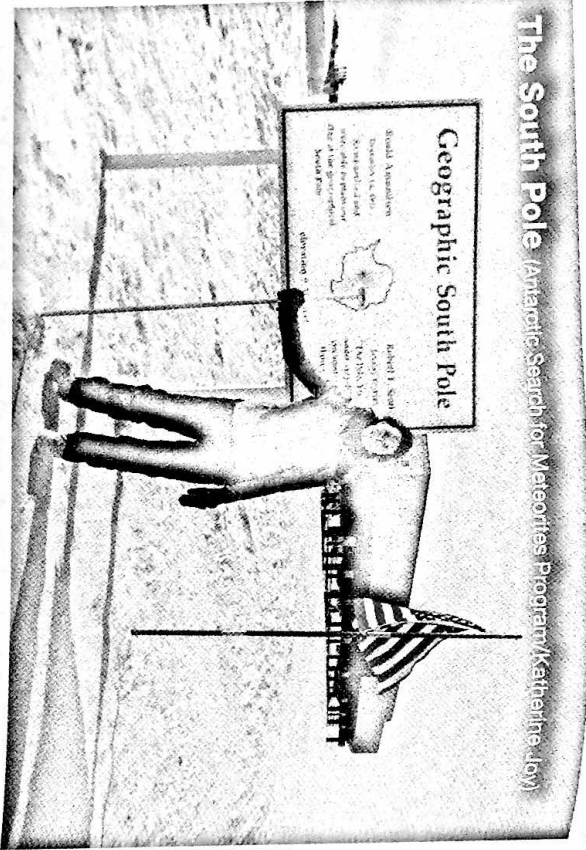


There aren't very many people in Antarctica. But there are many penguins! (Steve Allen photo)

Scientists in Antarctica
(Antarctic Search for Meteorites Program/
Katherine Joy)

contains the South Pole. It is surrounded by the Southern Ocean. There are many ways in which Antarctica is **unique** among the continents:

- It is **COLD**. The average temperature there is about 58 degrees below zero!
- Antarctica is completely covered by a layer of ice that averages more than a mile in thickness.



- Antarctica is the driest and windiest continent. In fact, it rains and snows so little there that the entire continent is classified as a desert!
- Because of its location, they don't really have normal sunrises and sunsets in Antarctica. It is light for six months (from September until March), then dark for six months.

There are quite a few penguins in Antarctica. Penguins are birds that can't fly and waddle awkwardly when they walk. (*Ask your teacher to demonstrate what waddling looks like!*) However, penguins swim very well, which helps them catch fish.

The only humans in Antarctica are people who live at research stations located around the continent. Most of them only stay for the Antarctic "summer," which goes from September through March.

Explorers and scientists

Antarctica is so cold and inhospitable that it wasn't that long ago that people "discovered" it. There is no evidence that people

even knew it was there until the early 1800s!

One of the many things that sets Antarctica apart from other continents is that no single nation "owns" it. Under an agreement called the Antarctic Treaty, the entire continent is set aside as a scientific preserve. No military activity is allowed there.

Some of you may wonder why anyone would want to visit the South Pole. Some of you may think it sounds like a great place.

If you would like to visit the South Pole, perhaps you can one day. However, it isn't an easy trip, and it isn't cheap. In fact, it costs about \$50,000 to go! If you do go, bring a big coat. ❄️

QUESTIONS

1) Name three ways Antarctica is unique among continents.

2) In August, is it dark or light in Antarctica?
