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Class-XII

English

Vistas

Chapter-3

Journey to the End of the Earth

Part - 3



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stark : पूरी तरह से



The Captain decided we were going to turn around and head back north, but before we did, we were all instructed to climb down the gangplank and walk on the ocean. So there we were, all 52 of us, kitted out in Gore-Tex and glares, walking on a stark whiteness that seemed to spread out forever.





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periphery : चारों तरफ का क्षेत्र



Underneath our feet was a metre-thick ice pack, and underneath that, 180 metres of living, breathing, salt water. In the periphery Crabeater seals were stretching and sunning themselves on ice floes much like stray dogs will do under the shade of a banyan tree.

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revelation: प्रकट करना

It was nothing short of a revelation: everything does indeed connect.

Nine time zones, six checkpoints, three bodies of water and many ecospheres later, I was still wondering about the beauty of balance in play on our planet.

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How would it be if Antarctica were to become the warm place that it once used to be? Will we be around to see it, or would we have gone the way of the dinosaurs, mammoths and woolly rhinos? Who's to say? But after spending two weeks with a bunch of teenagers who still have the idealism to save the world, all I can say is that a lot can happen in a million years, but what a difference a day makes!

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COMPREHENSION

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Question 1. How do geological phenomena help us to know about the history of humankind?

Answer : Study of the geological phenomena brings to our knowledge how the world must have been millions of years ago. As in Antarctica, Cordilleran folds and pre-Cambrian granite shields make us know that the climate there was much warmer in the past.

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Fossils buried in the earth give knowledge of huge animals in existence in the past. By studying Antarctica, we can understand the earth's present, past, and future. Thus, the geological phenomena help us know about the history of humankind.

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Question 2. What are the indications for the future of humankind?

Answer : The rapid increase of population has resulted in pressure on other species for supplies. The burning of fossil fuels has created a blanket of carbon dioxide around the world. The average global temperature is increasing. Even little changes in environment can have big consequences.

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Scientists warn that a further depletion in the ozone layer will affect the activities of phytoplankton. This will affect the life of all marine animals and birds of the region. The global carbon cycle will be affected. Thus the indications for the future of humankind are neither bright nor positive.

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Question 3. 'The world's geological history is trapped in Antarctica'. How is the study of this region useful to us?

Answer : Antarctica is the coldest, driest and windiest continent in the world today. But there was a time when India and Antarctica were part of the same landmass known as Gondwana. At that time the climate was much warmer and there was a huge variety of flora and fauna.

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By visiting Antarctica we can get a grasp of where we have come from and where we could possibly be moving towards. Antarctica is the only place in the world which has never sustained a human population. Moreover, it holds in its ice-cores half-million-year-old carbon records trapped in its layers of ice. In other words, the world' geological history is trapped in Antarctica.

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Question 4. What are Geoff Green's reasons for including high school students in the Students on Ice expedition?

Answer : 'Students on Ice' programme aims to study and examine the Earth's past, present and future by organising expeditions to Antarctica for high school students. The young students are provided inspiring educational opportunities which will help them to develop a new understanding and respect for our planet - the earth.

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The future generation of policy-makers is offered a life-changing experience. The main reason for including high school students in this expedition is their young age. They are at an age when they are ready to absorb, learn and act.

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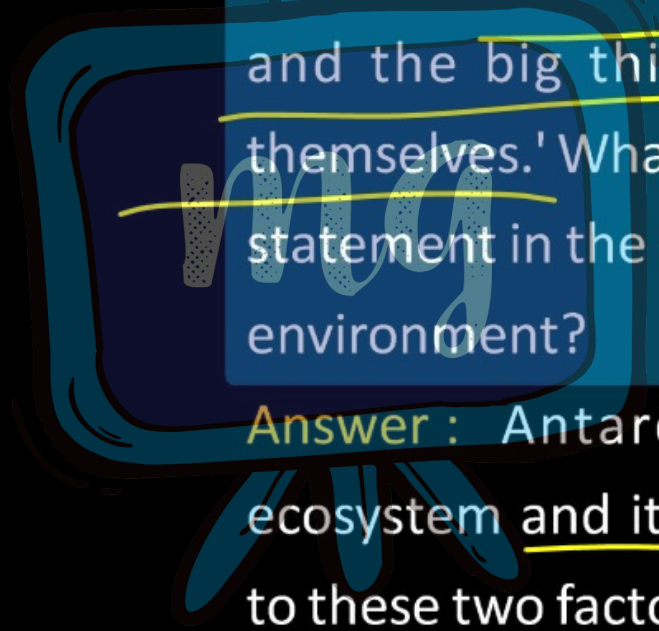

Question 5. 'Take care of the small things and the big things will take care of themselves.' What is the relevance of this statement in the context of the Antarctic environment?

Answer : Antarctica has simple ecosystem and it lacks biodiversity. Due to these two factors it is the perfect place to study how little changes in the environment can have big consequences.

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The author gives the example of very small, single-celled plants called phytoplankton. These grasses of the sea nourish and sustain the entire Southern Ocean's food chain. The phytoplanktons use the sun's energy to assimilate Carbon and synthesise organic compounds through photosynthesis.