

## “Ice” to Meet You

How would you like to have your milk delivered in big, frozen blocks? That is a part of life in **Verkhoyansk, Russia**, the coldest place in the northern hemisphere. The little town of 1,800 people is in Siberia. On its coldest winter day on record, the town endured a temperature of  $-90^{\circ}\text{F}$ !



What is life there like in the winter? The people of the town joke that if they call out to a friend in the winter, she will not hear them. That is because their words will freeze in the air! They say that she will have to wait until spring to hear what they said. The real truth is not far from the joke. If people go outside in the winter, they will hear a whooshing sound, like the sound of rice being poured out of a bag. It is the sound of their breath turning into ice crystals. The crystals fall to the ground in front of them. The native people call this sound “the whisper of the stars.”

The temperature makes life difficult. Sometimes, it is so cold that the trees explode and the foundations of houses split. That is because the wood contracts so much in the bitter cold. If people drink hot tea in Verkhoyansk, their teeth can crack. That is because of the extreme temperature change between the cold air and the hot tea. And, if people go outside and pour the tea out of their cups, it can freeze before it hits the ground.

Winter there is dark, as well as cold. On some days, the only daylight is a faint light, low in the sky. You may think that no one would want to live in such a cold, faraway place.

### Conversion

$$-90^{\circ}\text{F} = -67.78^{\circ}\text{C}$$

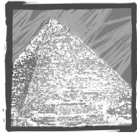


### Make a prediction.

What do you think the story will describe next?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Answer the following questions based on what you read on page 31. Then, finish reading the story at the bottom of the page.**

- 1. What is an antonym for *freeze*?
  - a. harden
  - b. crack
  - c. muffle
  - d. melt

- 2. Where is Verkhoyansk?
  - a. Alaska
  - b. Russia
  - c. Siberia
  - d. b. and c.

- 3. How cold can it get in Verkhoyansk? Write your answer in a complete sentence.

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- 4. Circle three adjectives that describe winter life in Verkhoyansk.

inviting    luxurious    difficult    tropical  
 frigid    busy    dark    humid

In the past, there were some people who lived in Verkhoyansk unwillingly. When Russia was ruled by *tsars*, or emperors, the town was used as a prison. People were sent to live there as punishment.

But, other people are from tribes who have lived there for thousands of years. Outside the town, there are groups of nomads who live in the mountains. They are hunters. They also raise herds of reindeer. They say that it is actually warmer in the snowy mountains than it is in the town of Verkhoyansk! That is because the town is in a valley between the mountains. The coldest air comes into the valley, and the mountains hold it there. If there is no wind to move it, the air in the town is like the air inside a freezer—still, dry, and cold.

But, the people of the town have found ways to deal with the cold. They gather blocks of ice from the river and melt them on their stoves for water. And, they buy their milk in large, frozen disks. It is easy to carry “wheels” of milk home and melt them when they are ready to use them. That’s life in Verkhoyansk!

