Name _____ Date _____

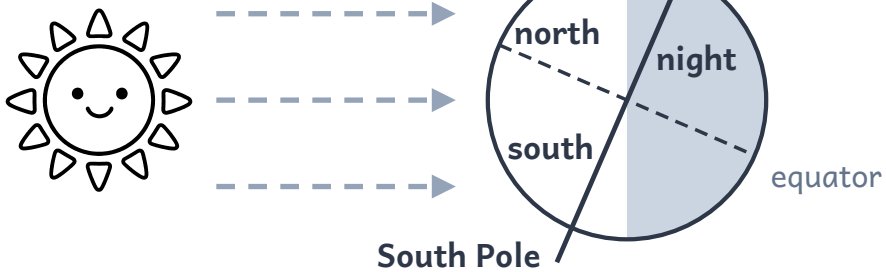


The Winter Solstice

Read the text and look at the picture. Then answer.

Why Do We Have a Solstice?

Earth moves around the sun. It takes one year to go all the way around. Its path is called its **orbit**. Earth also spins like a top, once each day. It spins around a line from the North Pole to the South Pole. This line is called its **axis**. But the axis is not straight up and down. It leans to one side, and it always leans the same way. In December, the northern half of Earth leans away from the sun. It gets less sunlight, so it is winter there. The southern half leans toward the sun, so it has summer. Each year has two days when one half leans the most toward the sun. Each one is called a **solstice**. One comes in June, and one in December.



In December, the northern half leans away from the sun. It is winter there.

The southern half leans toward the sun. It is summer there.

1. Earth's axis is straight up and down. **true** **false**

2. Earth goes around the sun once a ____ **day** **week** **year**

3. How many solstices are there each year? **two** **one** **four**

4. Look at the picture. Why is it winter in the north in December?

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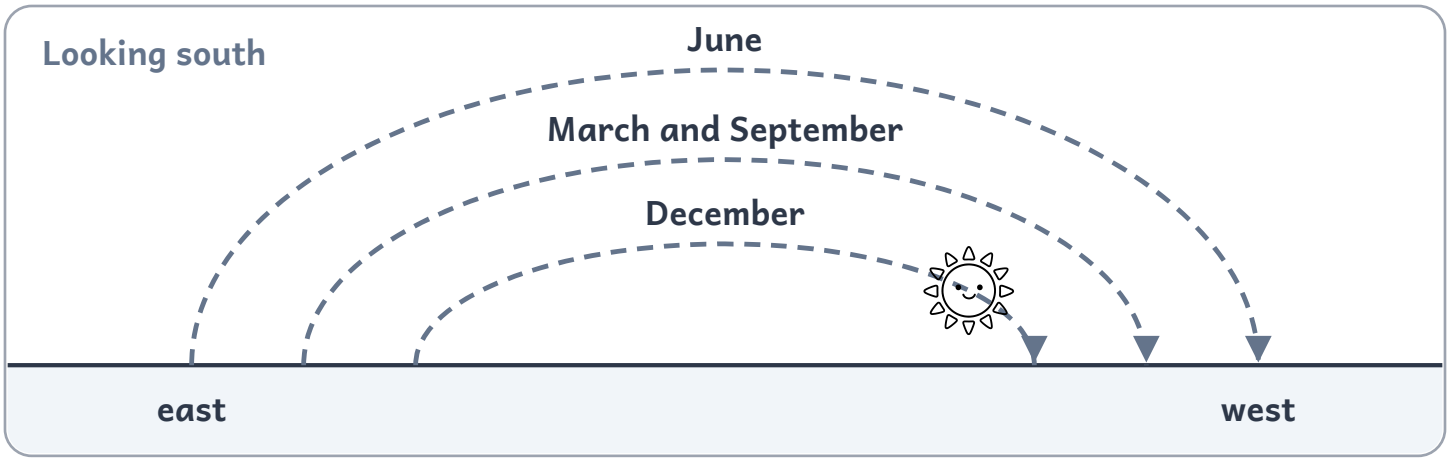
Name _____ Date _____

The Winter Solstice

Read the text and look at the picture. Then answer.

The Shortest Day

In the north, the December solstice comes around December 21. It is the shortest day of the year and the longest night. At noon, the sun is lower in the sky than on any other day, so shadows are long. The word **solstice** means "the sun stands still." All through the fall, the sun's path gets a bit lower each day. On the solstice, it stops going down. Then it starts to go up, and the days get a little longer. At the same time, the south has its longest day!



1. In the north, the December solstice is the **shortest** **longest** **hottest** ____ day of the year.

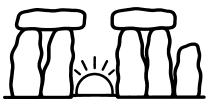
2. After the solstice, the days in the north get longer. **true** **false**

3. What does the word solstice mean?

4. Why are shadows long at noon on the solstice?

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Name _____ Date _____



The Winter Solstice

Read about two very old places. Then answer the questions.

Newgrange

Newgrange is in Ireland. People built it more than 5,000 years ago. That is even older than the pyramids of Egypt! It is a big, round hill of earth and stone. Inside, a long, narrow hall leads to a room. Over the door is a small opening called the roof box. On a few mornings around the December solstice, the sun comes up and shines in through it. A beam of light moves down the hall. It lights up the room at the end for about 17 minutes.

1. Newgrange is in ___ **Egypt** **Ireland** **England**

2. Newgrange is older than the pyramids of Egypt. **true** **false**

Stonehenge

Stonehenge is in England. It is a ring of giant stones. The biggest ones are more than twice as tall as a grown-up. People began to build it about 5,000 years ago. The builders lined up the tallest stones with the sunset on the shortest day there, in December. In June, on the longest day there, the sun comes up near a big stone outside the ring. People still go there to watch.

3. Stonehenge is a ring of giant ___ **towers** **stones** **trees**

4. At Stonehenge, the tallest stones line up with the sunset in June. **true** **false**

5. How can you tell that the builders watched the sun closely?

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Name _____ Date _____



The Winter Solstice

Read about two winter festivals. Then answer the questions.

Dongzhi

In China, the December solstice is called **Dongzhi** (dong-jur). Its name means "the peak of winter." It is a very old festival. Many families get together for it. They share warm food on the longest night of the year. In the south of China, many families eat **tangyuan**. These are sweet balls of sticky rice in a warm soup. The round balls stand for a family being together. In the north of China, many eat dumplings.

1. Tangyuan are sweet balls of ___ **sticky rice** **meat** **ice**

2. In the north of China, many families eat dumplings for Dongzhi. **true** **false**

Yalda Night

In Iran, the longest night of the year is called **Yalda** (yal-DAH) Night. Families get together, often at the home of a grandparent. They stay up late. They eat red fruits, such as **pomegranates** and watermelon. They eat nuts and dried fruit too. Many read poems out loud by Hafez, a poet from long ago. After this night, the days in Iran start to get longer. Families in Afghanistan have this night too.

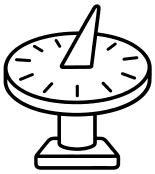
3. On Yalda Night, families eat red fruits such as ___ **bananas** **pomegranates** **lemons**

4. In Iran, Yalda is the shortest night of the year. **true** **false**

5. How are Dongzhi and Yalda Night alike?

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Name _____ Date _____



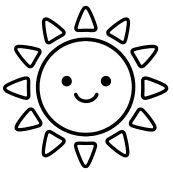
The Winter Solstice

Draw a line from each word to what it means.

solstice	the time when the sun comes up in the morning
orbit	the line Earth spins around, from pole to pole
axis	the time when the sun goes down in the evening
shadow	the longest or the shortest day of the year
sunrise	the path Earth travels around the sun
sunset	a dark shape made where something blocks the light

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Name _____ Date _____



The Winter Solstice

It is December. Circle where each one is true.

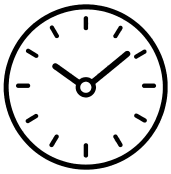
In December, the northern half of Earth leans away from the sun. Is each one true in the north or the south?

1.	It is winter.	**North**	**South**
2.	It is summer.	**North**	**South**
3.	The days are long and the nights are short.	**North**	**South**
4.	The sun sets early, before dinner.	**North**	**South**
5.	Shadows at noon are long.	**North**	**South**
6.	The sun is high in the sky at noon.	**North**	**South**
7.	Many children have their long summer break from school.	**North**	**South**
8.	Families in Iran get together for Yalda Night.	**North**	**South**

9. Why are the seasons opposite in the north and the south?

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Name _____ Date _____



The Winter Solstice

Keep a daylight log. Is the day getting longer or shorter?

Each day for a week, find the time of sunrise and sunset in your town with a grown-up. A weather app or a newspaper can tell you.

	Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Longer or shorter?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

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Name _____ Date _____



The Winter Solstice

How would you spend the longest night? Draw and write.

In many places, families gather on the longest night of the year. How would you spend it with your family or friends?

On the longest night, I would

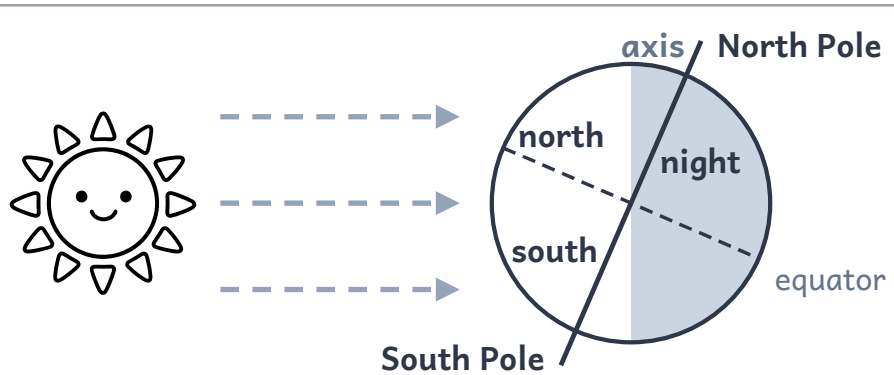
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The Winter Solstice

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1. Earth's axis is straight up and down. **true** **false**

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4. Look at the picture. Why is it winter in the north in December?

The northern half of Earth leans away from the sun.

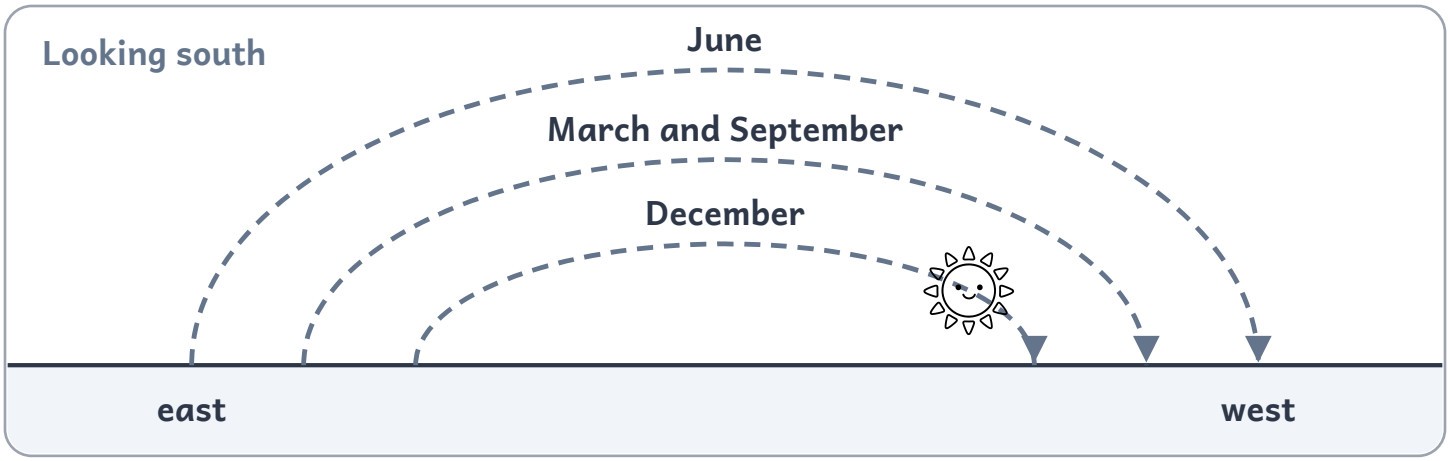
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1. In the north, the December solstice is the ____ day of the year. **shortest** **longest** **hottest**

2. After the solstice, the days in the north get longer. **true** **false**

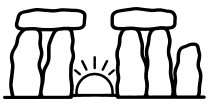
3. What does the word solstice mean?

The sun stands still.

4. Why are shadows long at noon on the solstice?

The sun is lower in the sky than on any other day.

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The Winter Solstice

Read about two very old places. Then answer the questions.

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3. Stonehenge is a ring of giant ___ **towers** **stones** **trees**

4. At Stonehenge, the tallest stones line up with the sunset in June. **true** **false**

5. How can you tell that the builders watched the sun closely?

They built Newgrange and Stonehenge to line up with the sun at the solstice.

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The Winter Solstice

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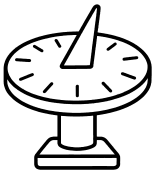
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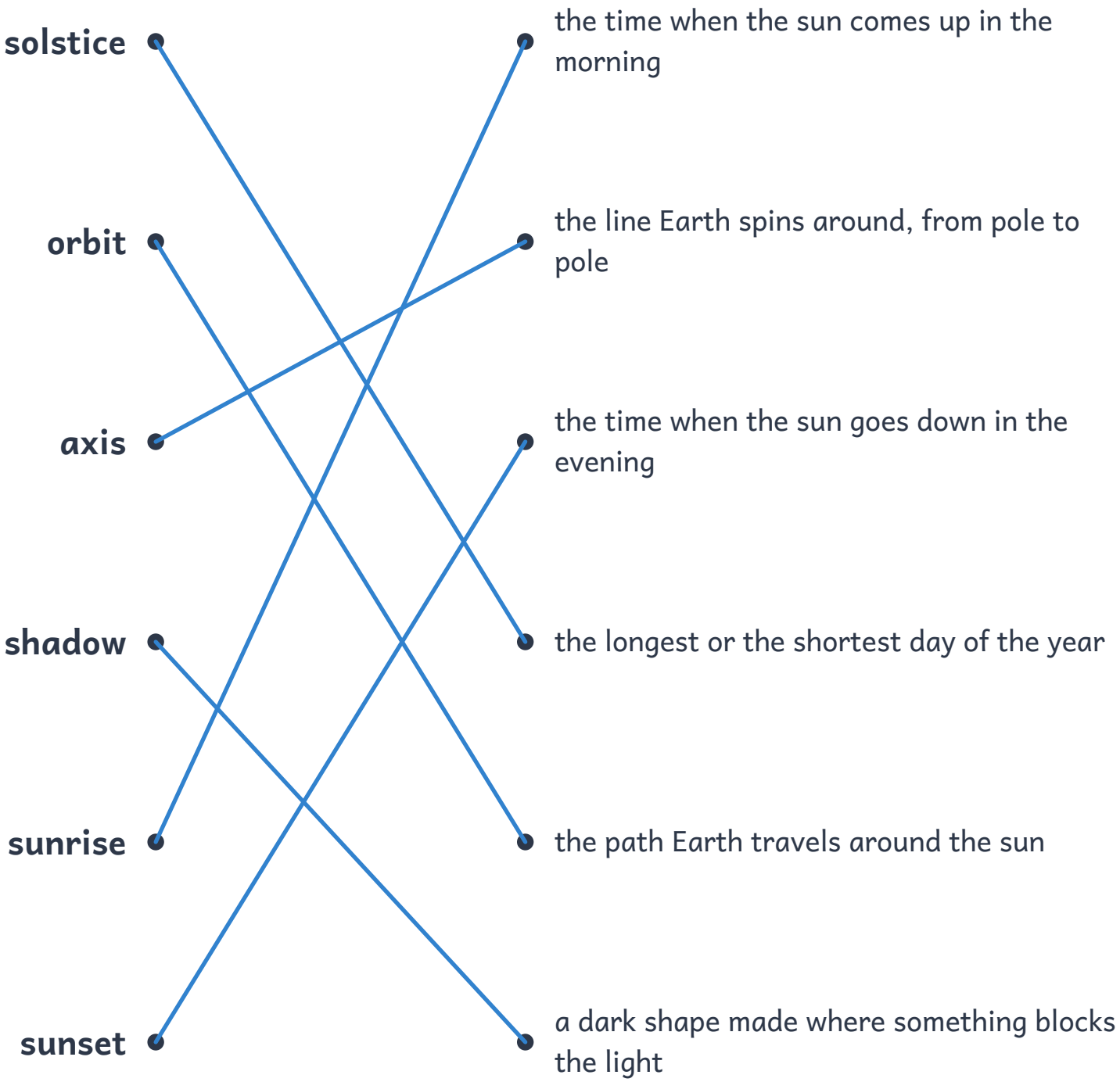
Families get together and share food on the longest night.

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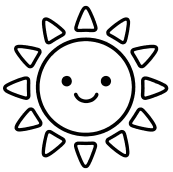


The Winter Solstice

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The Winter Solstice

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6. The sun is high in the sky at noon. North **South**

7. Many children have their long summer break from school. North **South**

8. Families in Iran get together for Yalda Night. **North** South

9. Why are the seasons opposite in the north and the south?

When one half of Earth leans toward the sun, the other half leans away from it.

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