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Our Changing Planet

LEVEL 6

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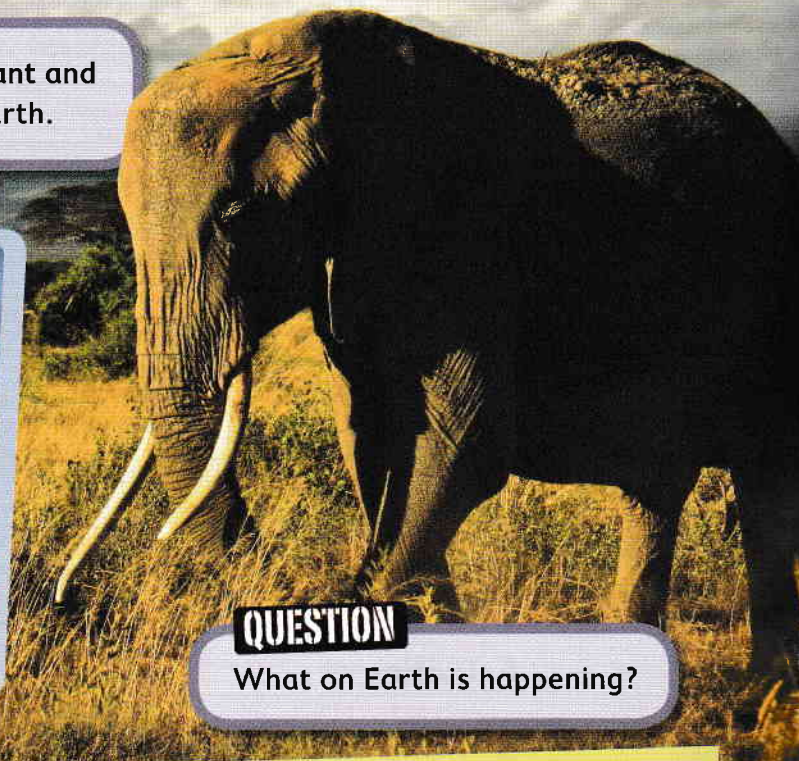
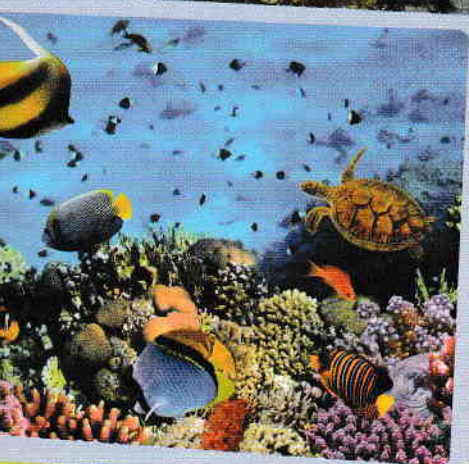
Climate is Changing

The Earth's environments – dry deserts, icy deserts, rainforests, grasslands, mountains and oceans – are the amazing habitats for life on this planet. The climate in each of these environments is very important. But climate is changing faster than ever before and the Earth is getting hotter. Scientists call this global warming.

Many scientists worry about the health and future of our planet. They tell us that we must change how we live. They say that we are destroying nature's habitats.

FACT

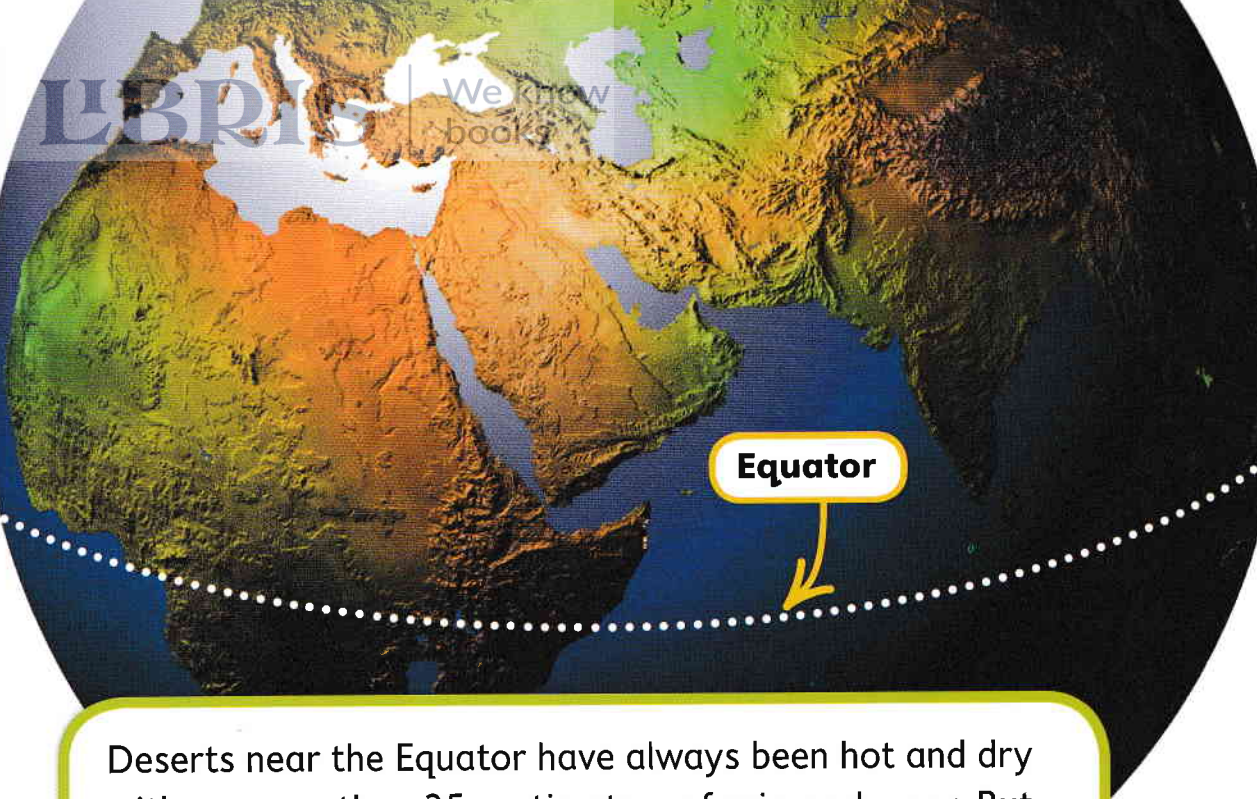
More than 1.2 million plant and animal species live on Earth.



QUESTION

What on Earth is happening?

desert a very dry land which is often sandy
global warming the result when the sun's heat cannot escape from the Earth
habitat the place where wild animals and plants live
species a group, or family, of plants or animals



Equator

Deserts near the Equator have always been hot and dry with no more than 25 centimetres of rain each year. But the deserts are getting hotter and drier, which is bringing dangerous droughts.

To the north and south of the Equator are the tropical rainforests, which can get up to 250 centimetres of rain each year! The rainforests have more plant species than anywhere else on Earth. But man has cut down a lot of trees.

Scientists say global warming and man's careless ways are threatening deserts, rainforests and other very important habitats.

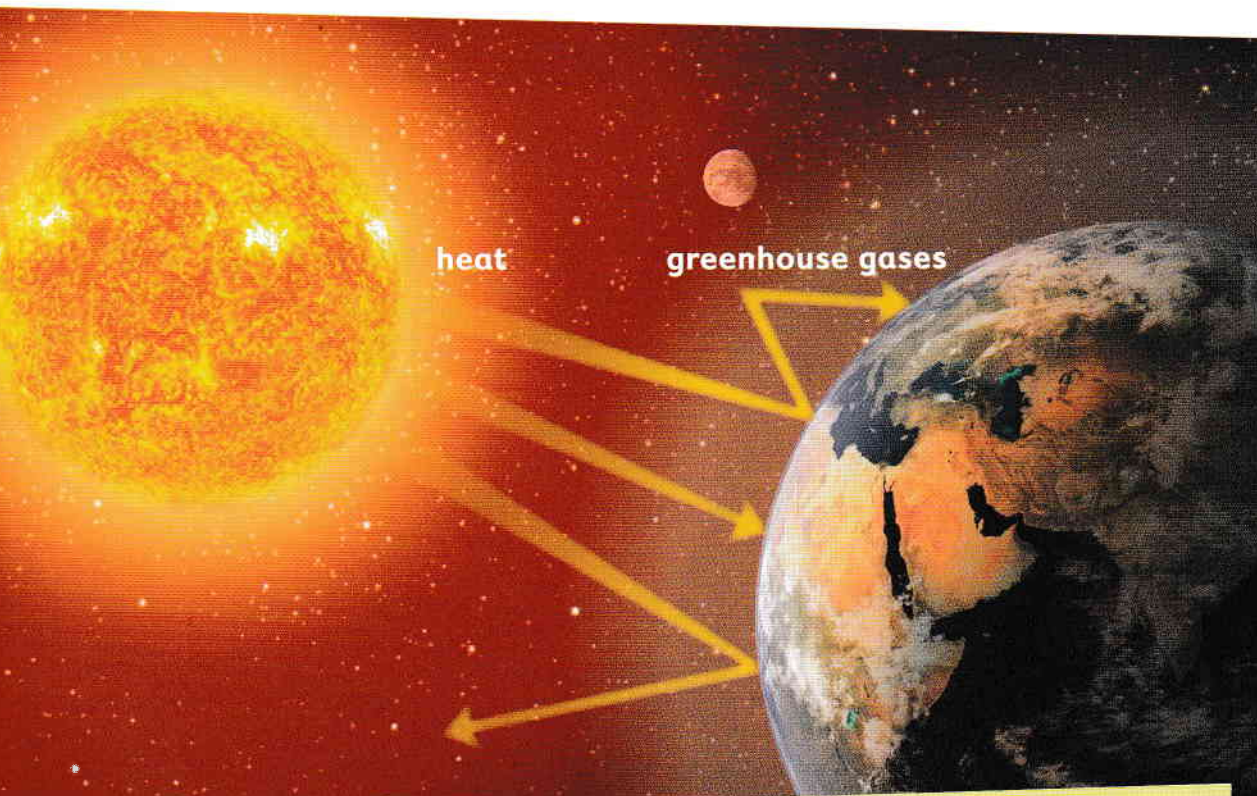


QUESTION

Can we do something about it?

The sun's power moves oceans around the planet and the result is different climates. People cannot change how oceans move. But we can reduce the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, for example carbon dioxide and methane.

Greenhouse gases keep our planet warm, but too many make the Earth too hot. There is now more carbon dioxide in the air than ever. When people and animals breathe out carbon dioxide, plants and trees take it in. When we destroy trees, more carbon dioxide stays in the atmosphere.



carbon dioxide when we breathe out, carbon dioxide comes out of our bodies
greenhouse gases something in the air that stops the sun's heat from escaping the Earth; we cannot see greenhouse gases
methane after cows eat, methane gas comes out of their bodies

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FACT

More meat from cows
means more methane
gas in the atmosphere.



When we burn fossil fuels, we produce even more carbon dioxide. Power stations and factories burn the most fossil fuels. When we drive cars or travel by plane, we are burning more. Heat in our homes usually comes from burning fossil fuels, too.

Methane gas is more powerful than carbon dioxide. Farm animals' stomachs produce a lot of methane. More methane comes out of cows than out of other animals. Today, people in the richest countries eat a lot of meat so more farmers are keeping more cows.



fossil fuel something we burn, for example oil, that comes