Who Owns the Arctic?

Countries race to claim the top of the world.

World leaders are fired up over one of the coldest places on the planet. That place is called the Arctic. It is an icy area at the northernmost part of the world.

Some countries that border the Arctic claim parts of it as their territories. A territory is an area that is controlled by a country.

Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States want to own more of the Arctic. That’s because of what is buried under it. Experts say about one-fourth of the world’s untapped oil and gas lies beneath the Arctic Ocean. That would power a lot of cars.

The oil and gas could soon become easier to reach. Temperatures in the Arctic are rising. That is causing the sea ice there to melt.

Most scientists say global warming is the cause for the meltdown. That is the slow rise of Earth’s temperature. Experts say that all the Arctic’s ice could be gone by 2035.
World leaders (above) discuss who should control the Arctic.

The countries’ leaders are working to prove the Arctic belongs to them. Under law, nations own about 200 miles of sea around their borders. However, if a country’s **continental shelf** lies beyond that, that country can claim more. A continental shelf is the underwater land that surrounds a continent.

World leaders recently met in Russia. There, they discussed who should control the Arctic. Catherine Loubier is a spokesperson for Canada’s government. “We take our responsibility for the future of the [Arctic] seriously,” she says.

**Arctic at a Glance**

**Geography:** Countries with land in the Arctic Circle are the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden.
People: Many people who live in the Arctic are Inuit. They are native, or local, to the area. About 150,000 Inuit live there.

Animals: Seals, fish, and whales live in the Arctic. About 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears live there too.
1. How are some different world leaders trying to prove that parts of the Arctic belong to them?
   
   A. They are arguing with each other and having big disagreements about the Arctic.
   B. They are looking at maps to prove how much sea territory and continental shelf they have in the Arctic.
   C. They are very serious about their responsibility for the Arctic.
   D. They are making plans to drill for the untapped oil and gas in the Arctic.

2. Which of the following does the author describe last in the passage?
   
   A. The author describes the oil and gas in the Arctic.
   B. The author describes the location of the Arctic.
   C. The author describes the geography, people and animals of the Arctic.
   D. The author describes how world leaders are trying to claim the Arctic.

3. The passage suggests that
   
   A. if there were not oil and gas under the Arctic Ocean, world leaders would not be as interested in owning the Arctic
   B. many world leaders are very angry about the issue of who owns the Arctic
   C. world leaders have committed to end global warming so that the ice in the Arctic does not melt
   D. leaders of several world countries are not interested in owning more of the Arctic

4. Read the following sentences and answer the question. “Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and the United States want to own more of the Arctic. That’s because of what is buried under it. Experts say about one-fourth of the world’s untapped oil and gas lies beneath the Arctic Ocean.”

What does the word **untapped** mean?
   
   A. not belonging to anyone
   B. not warm enough
   C. not available
   D. not yet used

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to describe
   
   A. the different animals that live in the Arctic
   B. the desire that several world countries have to own more of the Arctic
   C. the effect that global warming will have on the ice in the Arctic
   D. the decision to drill for untapped oil and gas in the Arctic
6. Why do some countries want to own more of the Arctic?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

7. What may happen by 2035 to the polar bears and seals that live in the Arctic?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Some countries have a continental shelf extending more than 200 miles around their borders _______ they want to claim more land in the Arctic.

A although
B however
C but
D so

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

World leaders recently met in Russia to discuss who controls the Arctic.

Who? world leaders

(did) What? ____________________________________________________________

Where? ________________________________________________________________

Why? _______________________________________________________________
10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

**Vocabulary Word:** native (na·tive): born or living in a particular place.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline the word native.

1. Many people like to eat native fruits and vegetables from nearby farms.
2. The native animals were very interesting for the travelers to see.
3. I really liked visiting the African museum with the native musical instruments.
4. This special flower is native to our part of the country.
5. For International Day, students wore costumes that were native to the country they chose.

10b. Which food is native to America?

11. Is the giraffe native to the United States? Explain your answer.

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