Name_____ Date_____

The Four Seasons

Since there are four seasons to talk about—***spring***, ***summer***, ***autumn***, and ***winter***—we have to pick one to start with. Let's start with the beginning of the school year. That comes in ***autumn***.

After you have had fun all ***summer***, you start to see the leaves on the trees changing. The plants and flowers are starting to look a bit tired. It seems to be getting dark outside sooner. The month of ***September*** starts the ***autumn*** season. ***October*** and ***November*** are ***autumn*** months too.

It's time to go to school! Are you entering a new grade?

Soon pumpkins will be seen on porches and in windows. (What are you going to be for Halloween?) Pumpkins and squash are late-harvest vegetables. They can stay in the garden until frost.

Speaking of frost, you might see it in the early morning. You will probably want a sweater to go outside. With the smell of ***autumn*** in the air, you might start dreaming of a big Thanksgiving meal!

What is happening…? ***Winter*** is coming!

If you live in the northern areas, you will soon need more than a sweater to go outside. You will need a heavy coat. If you live where it snows, you will want to dig out your sled and ice skates.

Most people celebrate major holidays in the ***winter***. (Do you?) The ***winter*** months are ***December***, ***January***, and ***February***. Christmas, Hanukah, the Festival of Lights, the New Year, and others are winter holidays. Why do so many people celebrate this time of year?

We can learn the answer by watching what happens in the sky!

When it was ***summer***, the days were long and warm. The ***summer*** months are ***June***, ***July***, and ***August***. The sun was rising far to the north in the eastern sky and lasted a long time before it set in the west.

As ***autumn*** came, the sun rose further to the south. The days grew shorter. The sun didn't have as far to travel before it set in the west.

By holiday time, the sun is rising at its farthest point to the south in the eastern sky. The days have gotten shorter and shorter. Thousands of years ago, people were afraid the days were going to keep getting shorter… and then disappear altogether!

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The Four Seasons (Cont'd)

But that didn't happen. All of a sudden, the days started getting longer again. That is why people everywhere celebrated. They watched the sun come up a little farther toward the north again each day.

This change always happens on December 21. This day is the shortest day of the year. We call it the ***winter solstice***. After December 21, the days start to get longer, even if we don't notice it right away.

Now people knew that ***spring*** was coming! ***March***, ***April***, and ***May*** are the months of ***spring***. Today, we watch our calendars, more than the sky, to see how soon ***spring*** will get here.

After ***February***, along comes ***March*** and the days are getting longer. It is still light out at suppertime now! The snow is melting—or is gone already. Soon the grass turns green and flowers push through the earth. Trees have swelling buds that will soon burst into leaf. The birds are up early and are singing. They are happy the cold nights of ***winter*** have gone away for a while.

By June 21st, the days are very long. In fact, June 21st is the longest day of the year. We call this the ***summer solstice***. It's ***summer*** again!

All ***summer*** long, we enjoy the sun and long days. But, every day of the ***summer***, the sun is on the move south. Is the sun really on the move? Does the sun really move about in the sky while we stay still?

We talk about where the sun is in our sky because here on earth, we do not feel we are moving. Instead, it looks like the sun is moving. Ancient people felt this too. They believed that the sun circled the earth.

Now we know this isn't true. The sun doesn't really rise up or set down. What happens is the earth spins around, and for part of the time, half of the earth is facing the sun. It is daytime on that side of the earth. The other side has night. As the earth spins, the opposite becomes true.

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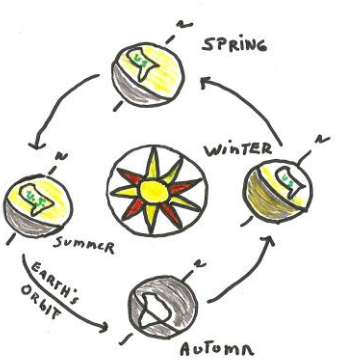
The Four Seasons (Cont'd)

The earth also revolves around the sun. This is what makes the ***seasons***! Spinning on a slight tilt, the earth moves around the sun and catches the most rays at different times of the year. Because of the earth's tilt, there is a time that the sun seems to rise far to the north in the northern hemisphere. As we just learned, this is warm summertime here.



As the earth moves around the sun, the tilt of the planet then catches the least amount of the sun's rays in the northern hemisphere. Then, that part of the earth is colder and has shorter days again. Because of the earth's tilt, the sun seems to come up much further south in the sky.

The sun does not move across our sky! We move around the sun…spinning the whole time! This is what is happening when we experience the changing ***seasons***.

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The Four Seasons Questions

Section One: Multiple Choice

1. We call spring, summer, autumn, and winter our four _____.
    a. children
    b. seasons
    c. holidays
    d. months

2. September is a month of _____.
    a. Winter
    b. Summer
    c. Spring
    d. Autumn

3. There are _____ months to every season.
    a. Two
    b. Four
    c. Six
    d. Three

4. When it starts getting cold, you might find _____on your window.
    a. Frost
    b. Birds
    c. Curtains
    d. Sun

5. People used to think that the sun revolved around the _____.
    a. Seasons
    b. Block
    c. Stars
    d. Earth

Section Two: True or False

1. December 21st is the longest day of the year.
_____

2. March, April, and May are the months of summer. _____

3. The sun rises and sets while spinning around the earth. _____

4. June 21st is the longest day of the year. _____

5. The tilt of the earth plays a part in our weather. _____

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The Four Seasons Answers

Section One: Multiple Choice

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. D

Section Two: True or False

1. F
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. T