

Name _____

Date _____

EUROPE

Climate and Vegetation

All questions require at least
THREE sentences on own paper.

PLACES & TERMS

North Atlantic Drift a current of warm water from the tropics that flows near Europe's west coast

mistral a cold, dry wind that blows from the north to the southern coast of France

sirocco a hot, steady wind that blows from North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea into southern Europe

Westerly Winds Warm Europe

What is the North Atlantic Drift?

A marine west coast climate covers much of Europe. It stretches from northern Spain across most of France and Germany. It reaches western Poland. It also exists in the British Isles. Some coastal areas of Scandinavia have this climate, too. In this region, summers are warm and winters are cool.

The influence of the ocean and the winds create this mild climate. The **North Atlantic Drift** is a current of warm water from the tropics. It flows near Europe's west coast. The *westerlies* are winds that blow from west to east. These winds pick up warmth from this current and carry it over Europe. The wind also carries moisture, so the area has enough rain.

Because of their high elevation, the Alps have a harsher climate. They are cold and snowy.

Mixed forests once covered much of this region. But for centuries, people have cut trees. They did so to get firewood and clear farms. Today, farmers in the region grow grains, sugar beets, livestock feed, and potatoes.

1. What effect do oceans currents and winds have on much of Europe?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Harsher Conditions Inland

How does the climate change as you go inland?

The winds do not carry the ocean's warmth far inland. So the climate there is not mild. Parts of Sweden, Finland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania have a humid continental climate. Winters are cold and snowy. Summers range from warm to hot. In general, the region has enough rainfall, and rain helps farming.

This region has lost many of its forests. The forests that still stand are mainly fir trees. The region also has broad fertile plains. Grasses once covered these plains. Today, farmers there grow grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. Potatoes and sugar beets are also major crops.

2. Why does the inland region of Europe have a harsher climate?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

The Sunny Mediterranean

What special winds affect the Mediterranean?

The region bordering the Mediterranean Sea has a mild climate. Summers are hot and dry with clear, sunny skies. Winters are mild and wet. This climate includes southern Spain and France. It stretches through Italy to Greece and other parts of the Balkan Peninsula. Mountain ranges protect most of this region from cold north winds.

Not all of the Mediterranean is protected. High mountains do not shield the southern coast of France. As a result, it receives the mistral. This is a cold, dry wind from the north.

Most Mediterranean countries experience the sirocco. This is a hot, steady wind that blows from North Africa into southern Europe. Some siroccos pick up moisture as they pass over the Mediterranean Sea and produce rain. Others carry dust from the desert. The sirocco blows mostly in the spring.

The Mediterranean region has mostly evergreen shrubs and short trees. They can stand the hot, dry summers. Major crops include citrus fruits, olives, grapes, and wheat. The Mediterranean has sunny beaches. Tourism is a major industry in the region.

3. How does climate affect life in the Mediterranean?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Land of the Midnight Sun

What does "midnight sun" mean?

A band of tundra climate lies in far northern Scandinavia. It is along the Arctic Circle. In this region, the land is often in a state of *permafrost*. This means that the subsoil stays frozen all year. No trees grow there—only mosses and lichens.

To the south of this lies a *subarctic* climate. It is cool most of the time and has harsh winters. Little grows there except short trees. Because of the climate, farming is limited to southern Scandinavia.

The region north of the Arctic Circle receives very different amounts of sunshine through the year. In far northern Scandinavia, there are winter days when the sun never rises. There are summer days when the sun never sets. As a result, the region is often called the Land of the Midnight Sun.

4. Why is farming limited to southern Scandinavia?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.