FL ELFAS
Passage Cover Sheet

Title:	On Thin Ice
Stimulus ID:	6892CN
Source:	Commissioned
Grade Band:	6-8
Genre:	Informational
Text Type:	Opinion Piece
Word Count:	301
Lexile:	1150
Lexile Range:	925-1185
Flesch-Kincaid:	8.6
Qualitative Ranking:	Simple

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On Thin Ice

The Arctic region on our planet has an extreme climate. Most animal species cannot survive in the bitterly cold environment. Some species, like the polar bear, have learned to adapt to Arctic conditions.

With its long neck and oar-like front paws, the polar bear is an excellent swimmer. It is the only aquatic bear in the world. The polar bear has fur that is double-coated, with long guard hairs that stick together to form a waterproof barrier to help keep it warm in the cold water. When hunting, the polar bear will walk along the ocean ice, sometimes covering thousands of miles in a season. When catching its favorite prey, ringed seals, polar bears will look for holes in the ice made by the seals. The seals create these holes so they can breathe after long periods of time in the water. The polar bear finds a hole, waits until the seal arrives, and then grabs the seal through the ice. The polar bear has learned to survive in the harshest conditions on the planet.

The polar bear's habitat is slowly melting away.

Both the polar bear and the ringed seal, however, are disappearing. Global warming, which is causing dramatic changes to the Arctic environment, is the cause. The Arctic ice starts melting earlier now in the warm season, which truncates the polar bear's hunting season and makes the polar bear's hibernation and mating grounds smaller. Much of the polar bear's survival depends on the wide expanse of ice in the Arctic. Some studies have found that as much as twenty percent of the polar bear population has disappeared in the last thirty years. Studies estimate that the polar bear may reach extinction by the year 2050 if action is not taken right away. Global warming is a problem that can no longer be

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ignored.

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ELL CONSIDERATIONS:

- To orient ELLs to the geographic conditions described in the passage, show the location of the Arctic region on a classroom map. Show pictures of the snowy glacial region, and explain that the glaciers have been melting. If possible, bring an ice cube to class. Set it on the windowsill in the sunlight, and call attention to the puddle of water at the end of class. Compare the ice cube to glacial melting.

- Discuss the physical attributes necessary to survive in a polar environment. The polar bear's blubber, thick undercoat, and outer guard hairs keep it warm. The pads of its large feet have dermal bumps, which are thought to help it get traction on the ice. Polar bears are excellent swimmers.

- The passage is written in the simple present tense. Elicit correct third-person singular verbs by asking *does*- questions. Ask, for example, "What kind of climate does the Arctic have?" (It has an extreme climate; it has a cold climate.) "What does the polar bear's survival depend on?" (Much of its survival depends on the Arctic ice.)

- Call attention to the following tier two and three vocabulary words in the passage for some pre-discussion. In addition, teachers may use the words below in a sentence or use synonyms or antonyms in the discussion.

Tier two words:

- environment
- expanse

Tier three words:

- adapt
- aquatic
- estimate
- extinction
- hibernation
- truncates

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