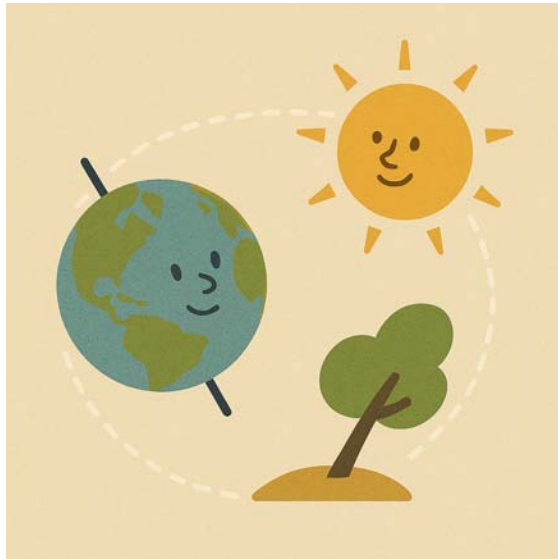


Name _____

Why Does Weather Change with the Seasons?



Have you ever noticed how the weather feels different throughout the year? In summer, it's warm and sunny. In winter, it can be cold and snowy. Fall and spring bring changes in temperature, wind, and rain. But why does this happen?

The main reason for changing weather is the tilt of the Earth and its orbit around the Sun. Earth doesn't sit straight up and down. It is tilted on its axis, like a spinning

top leaning to the side. As Earth moves around the Sun during the year, different parts of the planet get more or less sunlight.

When your part of the Earth tilts toward the Sun, you get more direct sunlight and longer days. This is summer. The Sun's rays hit your area more strongly, warming the land, air, and water. That's why it feels hot in the summer and plants grow quickly.

Six months later, your part of Earth tilts away from the Sun. Now you get less sunlight and the days are shorter. This is winter. With less warmth, the air becomes colder, and snow or ice can form in some places.

Spring and fall are in-between seasons. In spring, days get longer, and temperatures rise as Earth slowly tilts back toward the Sun. In fall, days grow shorter, and things cool down as Earth tilts away again.

These changes in sunlight also affect weather patterns. Warm air rises and can hold more moisture, so summer often brings thunderstorms. Cold air sinks and holds less moisture, so winter is usually drier, though snow can fall in very cold places.

Plants, animals, and even people adjust their lives around the seasons. Bears hibernate in winter. Farmers plant crops in spring. We wear coats in the cold and shorts in the heat.

So the next time the weather changes, remember: it all starts with the Earth's tilt and its trip around the Sun!