Cross-Curricular Cut
Geography

Arctic Ice Caps

1 Look at the pictures. What do you think would happen if the ice in the Arctic melted?

Listening

2 Listen and underline the correct word.

1 The earth's temperature has been rising at an **alarming/calming** rate.
2 The most drastic changes to the ice caps and the local ecosystems have been documented in the **North/South** Pole.
3 The rapid melting of the Arctic ice caps has **only local/global** repercussions.

Reading

3 Read the article and answer the following questions. Then, explain the words/phrases in bold.

1 How does the rise in temperature affect the ice caps? Why is it alarming?
2 Are the effects of the ice caps melting in the Arctic local or global? Explain.

Speaking

4 What does the author mean when he wonders: "Are we indeed skating on thin ice?" What can we do to improve the situation? Discuss in groups.

Writing

5 ICT Write about what other effects you think that the melting of polar ice caps will have on the earth (140-180 words). Research the subject by searching on the Internet and using magazines before you start writing.

Are we skating on thin ice?

Over the last century, the earth's temperature has been rising at an **alarming rate**, **affecting** the **ice caps** in the polar regions. A global temperature rise of about half a degree Celsius (0.9 degrees Fahrenheit) has been documented in the last 100 years. Even though such temperature changes might sound **minute**, the melting ice caps and the resulting changes in the polar landscape can result in **devastating** effects for the local **flora** and **fauna,** and the local inhabitants, as well as trigger global changes.

The most drastic changes to the ice caps and the local **ecosystems** have been documented in the Arctic in the North Pole. The Ward Hunt Ice Shelf, the largest single block of ice in the Arctic, which has been **intact** for 3,000 years, cracked in 2000 and is slowly breaking. As a result, the enclosed rare freshwater lake drained into the ocean and its unique ecosystem was destroyed. In addition, polar bears, walruses, and seals have changed their **migration patterns** and feeding habits. These marine mammals have adapted to life on sea ice and will be at risk of extinction as their natural habitat is **altered**. However, the rapid melting of the Arctic ice caps does not only have local **repercussions**. As this protective ice layer **shrinks**, the earth **absorbs** more sunlight and global temperatures are rising even more. So we need to take notice and wonder: Are we indeed **skating on thin ice**?