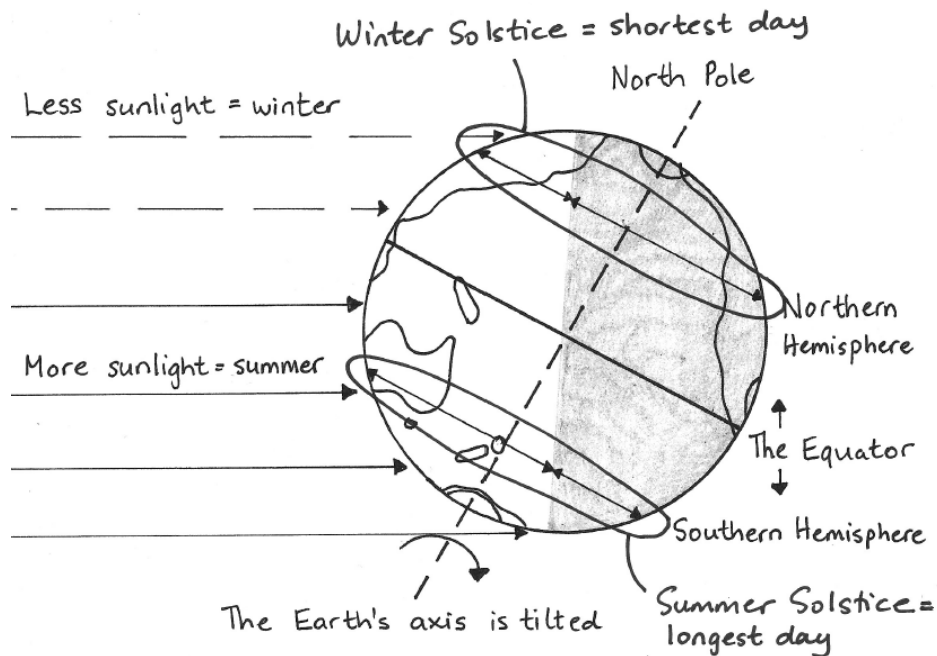


The solstice

answers

A. The diagram shows the Earth on 21 December. What can you see? Circle the arrows that show day and night in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Discuss the diagram, eliciting the key points: 21 December is the December solstice, the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere and the longest day of the year in the southern hemisphere. Because the Earth's axis points away from the sun at this time of year, there is less direct sunlight in the northern hemisphere and the days are shorter, producing colder weather (winter). In the southern hemisphere, there is more direct sunlight and the days are longer, producing hotter weather (summer). The shaded area in the diagram shows the night. You can see that the North Pole is in darkness at this time of year. Look at the arrows just below the North Pole: the one on the left shows day and the one on the right shows night. The arrow showing night is longer because the nights are longer and the days are shorter. The winter solstice is when the night is the longest and day is the shortest. The opposite occurs in the southern hemisphere. At the equator, sunlight is always direct and the days and nights are equal all year long.



B. Read and complete the sentences using the words in the box.

winter	South	shortest	day	night
summer	December	equator	longest	North

- In the northern hemisphere, 21 December is the winter solstice. It is the shortest day of the year. At the North Pole it is always night.
- In the southern hemisphere, 21 December is the summer solstice. It is the longest day of the year. At the South Pole it is always day.
- At the equator there are two seasons – the rainy season and the dry season.