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Maps of the world show oceans and seas surrounding groups of islands and land, the largest of which are the seven continents in their position on Earth. Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Australia, and Antarctica each have special features that make them unique and interesting to study.[1] For example, the highest mountain in the world stands tall in Asia, which is the largest of the continents. The longest river in the world winds through the continent of Africa, and the largest waterfall rushes over a cliff on the continent of South America.[2] No two continents are exactly alike and each one is home to special types of climates, animals, and plants.

Experts determine climate types by researching extensive weather history for generalizations about the kind of weather in an area.[3] Climates on the continents range from extremely cold in Antarctica to tropical and rainy in parts of South America, to dry and desert-like in parts of Africa.[4] Many different climates can exist among the countries within a single continent; however, North America is the only continent that has every kind of climate.[5] For example, Arizona is hot and dry year-round, Florida is rainy and warm, and parts of Canada and Alaska are freezing for most of the year.

A continent's climate plays a large part in determining which plants and animals will thrive on it in their habitat. It takes a special kind of animal to face polar weather, so it is no

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wonder that animals in Antarctica, like the Emperor Penguin, have built-in protection against the climate such as waterproof feathers and extra layers of fat."[6] Some animals are so well suited to the conditions on their continent that they don't live anywhere else on the planet. Animals that can only be found in one area are called "endemic."[7] For example, nearly half of the more than 800 species of birds on the continent of Australia[8] can't be found anywhere else in the world.[9] The lyrebird is a remarkable example of an Australia-only bird since it can perfectly imitate the sounds it hears such as a tractor starting, a dog barking, or a baby crying.[10] Each continent has its share of fascinating creatures and plants that don't live or grow anywhere else.

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MY QUESTIONS

MY TEACHER'S THOUGHTS

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