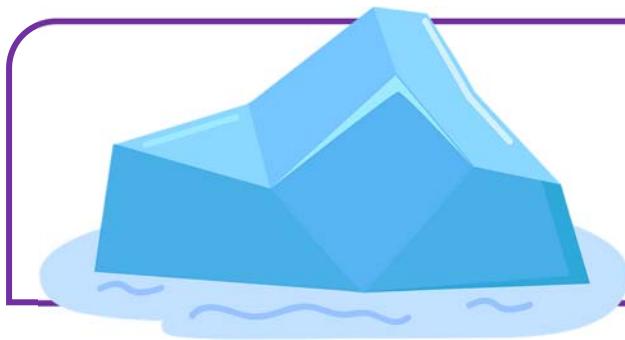


Name _____



Northern Passage

Directions: Read the case study about the Northwest Passage. Then answer the higher-level analysis questions in complete, well-supported sentences.

Changing Access to the Northwest Passage

The Northwest Passage is a sea route through the Arctic Archipelago of northern Canada. For centuries, explorers searched for this passage because it offered a shorter route between Europe and Asia. Thick, year-round sea ice prevented regular travel and made the route extremely dangerous. Only a few vessels with special equipment were able to navigate it.

In recent decades, rising temperatures in the Arctic have reduced the amount and thickness of sea ice across the region. During some summers, parts of the Northwest Passage become mostly ice-free, allowing commercial ships, cruise vessels, and research teams to travel through the area more easily. This new accessibility creates opportunities for faster shipping routes and scientific exploration, but also raises concerns.

Canada claims that the Northwest Passage lies within its internal waters, meaning it has full control over how the route is used. Other nations argue that the passage should be considered an international strait open to global shipping without strict Canadian control. Increased ship traffic also introduces environmental risks, including oil spills, disturbance of marine mammals, and damage to fragile coastal ecosystems. As sea ice continues to decline, these debates and risks are likely to grow.

Name _____

Northern Passage

1. Why did the Northwest Passage remain largely unusable for most of history?

2. According to the case study, what recent changes have increased access to the passage?

3. Identify 2 potential benefits of greater accessibility. Explain why they matter.

4. Identify two environmental risks linked to increased travel through the Northwest Passage.

5. Summarize the disagreement between Canada and other countries about control of the passage.

6. How might declining sea ice influence political relationships between Arctic and non-Arctic nations?

7. In your opinion, what should be the top priority when deciding how the Northwest Passage is used? Support your position with evidence.
