

Recitation D

Endless Summer

Sometimes it's hard to believe, but our planet is a sphere like a basketball or beach ball. The equator is an imaginary stripe that runs all the way around the Earth's surface. It divides the planet into two equal halves called hemispheres. Areas above the equator lie in the Northern Hemisphere, while areas below the equator lie in the Southern Hemisphere. Areas along the equator have a very warm climate. In fact, some people say that it is always summer at the equator! The North and South Poles, the farthest places from the equator, always have arctic temperatures.

One reason for the high temperatures along the equator might be that the earth bulges slightly there. Regions here are closer to the sun, but scientists say that this isn't a sufficient explanation. The equator is only a few thousand miles closer to the sun than most other areas on Earth. An additional explanation is the angle and strength of sunlight at the equator. The sun's rays hit regions along the equator at a direct angle, but other regions on Earth receive sunlight at indirect, less enhanced angles. It is as if a beam of sunshine shines down on the equator in a straight line. Think of a flashlight pointing directly down onto a surface.

This also helps explain why we have seasons since, as our planet orbits the sun, certain locations get closer or farther away from it. The earth tilts as it rotates, so the angle of sunlight changes throughout the year. When the sun's rays hit at the most direct angle, we call that summer. When they hit at the most indirect angle, we call that winter. This is why most other regions on Earth have four seasons and changing climates. Unlike other areas, the equator has a single season and a very limited climate range. The sun also rises and sets at the same time every day.

(319words)