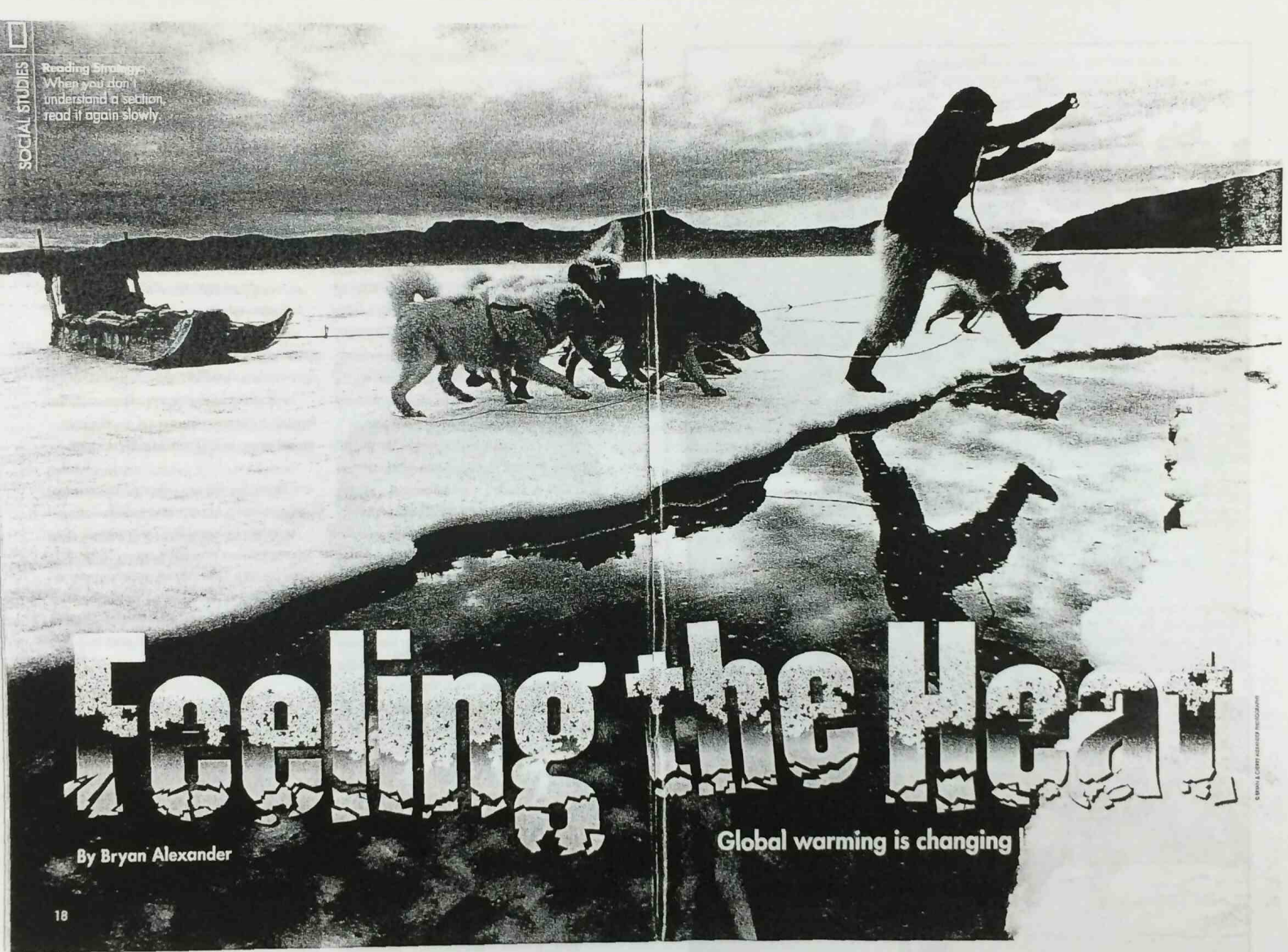


Reading Strategy
When you don't understand a section, read it again slowly.



Feeling the Heat

By Bryan Alexander

Global warming is changing



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Bryan Alexander wears reindeer skins to stay warm in the cold Arctic.



Not very many people have been to the top of the world, but I have. I am a photographer. I have been visiting people in Arctic countries for more than 30 years. The Arctic is the large area around Earth's North Pole. Over the years, I have seen Arctic people's lives start to change. What is causing this change? **Global warming** is a big part of it.

Earth is heating up. This is called global warming. Ice is melting. Weather is getting more extreme. Earth's temperature has risen a full degree in the past century.

This might not seem like a lot. You might not have even noticed a difference in the weather. Yet warmer weather is causing problems for the Arctic people I have met.

On Thin Ice

A few winters ago, I visited friends who live farther north than anyone else in the world. They live in a place called Greenland. Their village is named Thule.

People in Thule have relied on winter ice for hundreds of years. That is because the animals they hunt, such as seals and whales, live in the sea. To get to the sea, my friends travel across the ice with sleds pulled by strong dogs.

Now, because the weather is warmer, the ice is thin and slushy—even in winter. The hunters and their sleds can fall through the thin ice. I saw how dangerous thin ice can be when I joined a hunting trip.

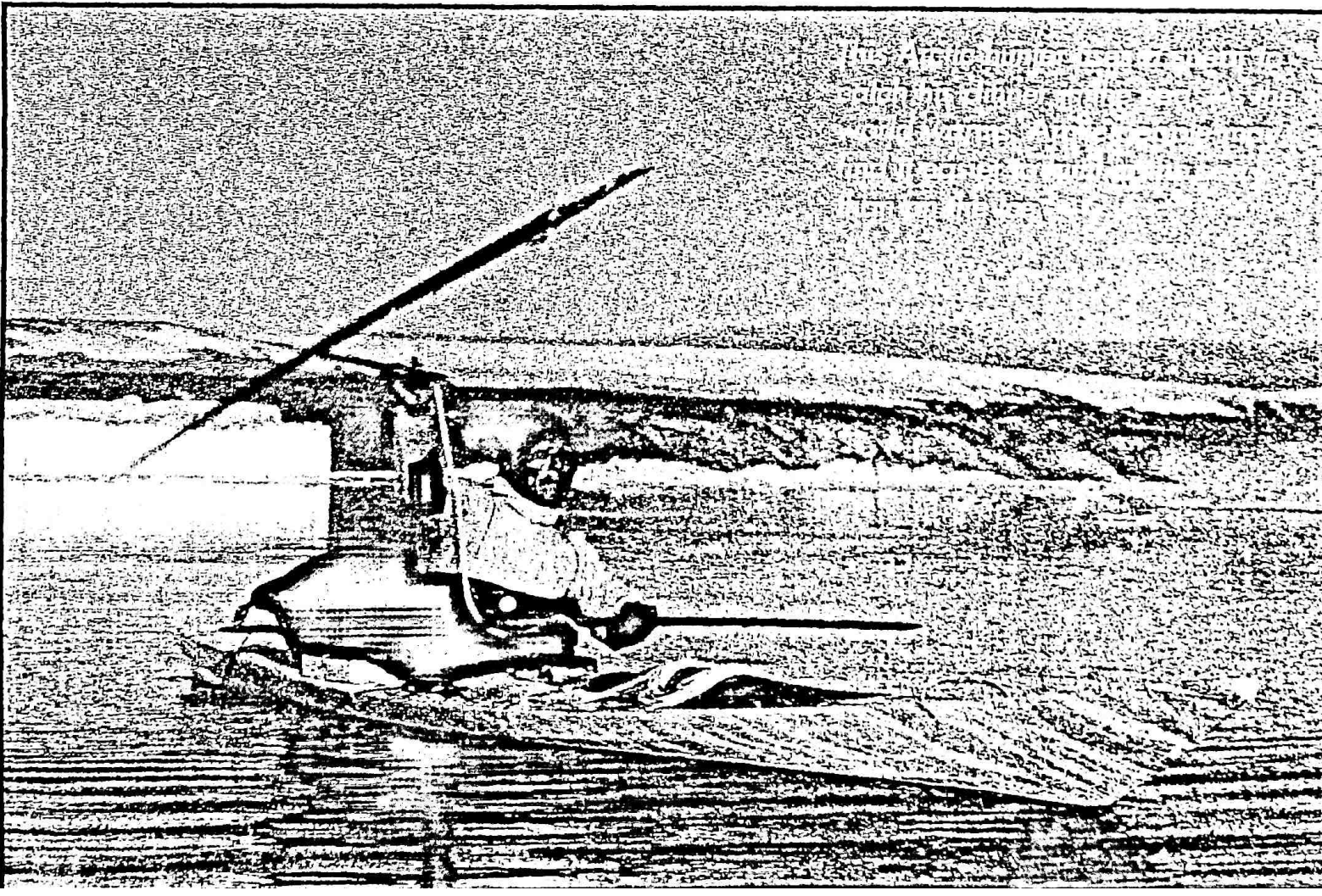
One morning, I was walking near our campsite. Suddenly, the ice cracked open under my feet. I fell into the freezing water. I shouted for help, but my friends didn't hear me. I was in trouble. In a few minutes, the icy water would stop my heart from beating. I needed to get out quickly.

I grabbed at the ice. It wasn't strong enough to hold me. It broke off in my hands. I looked around, hoping to spot thicker ice. Finally, I found some. I quickly pulled myself out of the water.

That cracking ice scared me. It made me realize what a big problem thin ice is for the people in Thule. If the warming continues, the ice will get even thinner. My friends will no longer be able to hunt. That means that they will not be able to get food the way they used to.



These dogs step carefully over the rocks as they return from a hunting party.



The Arctic hunter uses a sled to carry his collection of reindeer and other animals. The sled is pulled by a team of dogs. The hunter is wearing heavy clothing and is holding a long pole.

Looking for Lichens

The people of Thule aren't the only ones having problems with our warmer world. I have seen people in Russia struggle also. These people, called the Nenets, raise reindeer. The Nenets depend on reindeer for everything. They use the meat for food. They use the skins to make shelter and warm clothing.

The Nenets are nomads. They move around so that their reindeer herds can find plenty of food. In the winter, reindeer eat **lichens**. These are small plants that cover the ground. During winter, lichens are often buried under snow. Reindeer have to kick away the snow to find the lichens.

This is becoming harder for the reindeer. Warmer weather is melting the snow. When the weather gets colder, the melted snow turns to ice and covers the lichens. The reindeer cannot kick the ice off the lichens. As a result, the reindeer starve. Many of these animals have died.

Shrinking Spaces

Warmer weather is also hurting people I know in Alaska. Their village is called Shishmaref. It is falling into the sea. Long ago, people in Shishmaref built their houses on frozen ground called **permafrost**. This is ground that usually stays frozen the whole year.

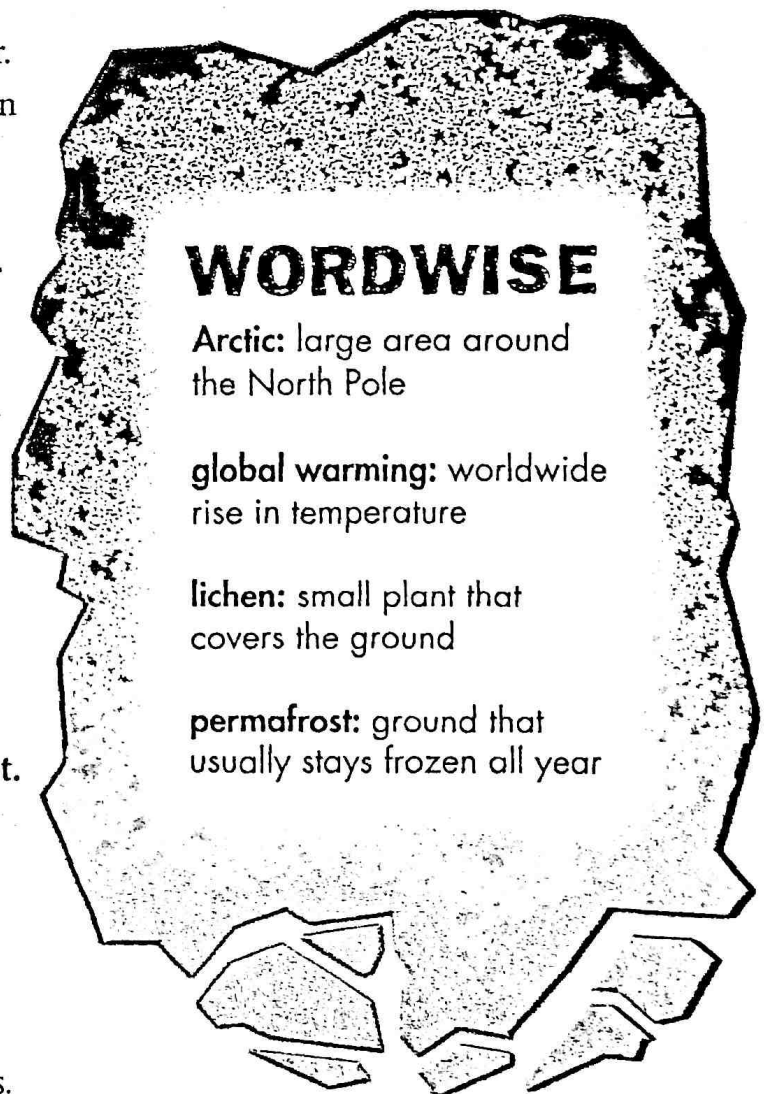
Warmer weather is melting the permafrost. That leaves the houses on soft ground. The ground cannot support the houses. They fall into the sea during storms.

Changing With Weather

Warmer weather is making things hard for Arctic people. Yet they are already adapting to deal with warmer weather. As the temperature rises, these people are changing the way they live.

People in Thule are finding new ways to hunt without traveling on thin ice. The Nenets are looking for new places to feed their reindeer in winter. Villagers in Alaska are rebuilding their homes on ground that won't melt. It is not easy, but they are learning new ways to survive.

How might global warming affect you?



Reindeer provide meat, milk, and skin to make clothing and shelter for this Nenets boy and his family.



This house in Shishmaref was built on frozen ground. When the ground melted, a strong storm easily washed the house away.

