**5th Grade**

**Informative/Explanatory Writing**

***What Causes Changes in the Weather?***

**STUDENT PACKET**

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Directions:**

**1.** **Science Notebook/Folder:** You may use information from your notes to include in your report.

**2.** **Read Article #1:** ***“An Introduction to Weather”***

**3. Read Article #2:** ***“Meteorology and Weather Maps”***

**4. Write an informative/explanatory report.**

**Your Writing Task:**

**Write an informative report that explains the scientific evidence about what causes changes in the weather.**

**Article #1:**

***“An Introduction to Weather”***

Retrieved from [www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org)

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What does the word “weather” mean to you? Everyone knows how to describe

the weather. There are beautiful sunny days with blue skies and then there are gray

rainy days perfect for staying in bed. But do you know what actually *causes* weather?

The pictures above show the forecast for a week. Soon you will know what causes

different types of weather!

Let’s start with a **scientific** definition of weather. Weather is the state of the

**atmosphere** at a given time and place. Four main ingredients determine the weather:

*temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction*, and *air pressure.*

*Temperature* is the heat of the air. When the sun shines down on earth, it warms

up the earth’s surface. But that is not all that happens. The warmth of the sun also

heats up the water on earth. This process is responsible for many changes in weather

and weather patterns. A thermometer measures temperature.

*Humidity* is the amount of water in the air. The air always has water in it, even

though we cannot always see it. Most of the weather conditions that we can observe

come from humidity. Clouds, rain, and snow all have to do with humidity.

*Wind speed and direction* carry the weather. They also help weathermen predict

the weather. Weathermen can measure wind speed and direction to determine how

fast a storm is moving. Often the winds blowing far up in the Earth’s atmosphere are

different than the winds we feel on Earth.

*Air Pressure* has to do with the thickness of air. To understand air pressure,

imagine you are standing in a room packed with people. There is a lot of pressure in

the room. You can feel the person behind you hitting your elbow. If someone opens up

a door into an empty room, people will start moving into the empty room until there are

about the same number of people in both rooms. Air particles spread out in the same

way. They always move from an area of high pressure to an area of low pressure. A

barometer measures air pressure.

All of the weather’s four main ingredients **interact** with each other. As air particles respond to changes in pressure and move, they create wind. On a very humid day, there may be many clouds in the sky. When it is cloudy, many of the sun’s rays never reach the earth. What does this do to the temperature?

**scientific** - knowledge based on testing, experiments and measuring

**atmosphere** - the shield of air surrounding the earth

**interact** - to act between people, groups, or things

**Article #2:**

***“Meteorology and Weather Maps”***

Retrieved from [www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org)

Meteorology is the study of winds and weather patterns. Meteorologists**,**

or weathermen, try to predict what the weather will be. They study weather

patterns and carefully observe temperature. They also consider other factors that

affect weather like humidity, wind speed, and air pressure.

Today, meteorologists can use **satellite** pictures to study the weather.

Satellites can show fronts. A *“front”* is the edge between a cold **mass** of air and a

warm mass of air. The outer edge of a mass of warm air is called a *“warm front.”*

The outer edge of a mass of cold air is called a *“cold front.”*

Have you ever seen your weatherman describe the movement of fronts? Have you ever looked at a weather map? Here are the symbols that weather maps use to identify cold fronts and warm fronts:



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**satellites** - cameras in space that circle the earth and can take pictures of the atmosphere

**mass** - a lump, piece or amount of anything without any clear shape or size

Look at the *“warm front.”* Do you see the red half circles pointing up?

That shows that the air is rising. Remember that warm air always rises. The curved line

represents the front of the air mass.

Look at the symbol for the *“cold front.”* See how the blue triangles on the

curved line are pointing downwards? This means that the cold air is falling.

Remember how cold has more pressure than warm air and falls? The cold air is

falling down and forcing the warm air to move up.

Cold fronts generally make thunderstorms. Thunder happens when warm

air gets trapped beneath cold air and heats up the cold air really fast. This makes

lightning. Thunder and lightning actually happen at the same time. Thunder is

what we hear, and lightning is the flash we see.

Did you know that light travels faster than sound? This is why you can see a bolt of lightning before you hear the crash of thunder. If you count the seconds between a flash of lightning and a roll of thunder, you can **estimate** how many miles away a storm is.

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**estimate**-a rough guess about the amount, distance or cost of something.

**Informative/Explanatory Report**

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**Be sure to revise and edit your work!**