Water, Water Everywhere...

Name: ____________________________

Water is arguably Earth's most precious resource. After all, we can't live without it, and Earth is the only planet we know of that has it. Our entire planet is covered in water, with little pieces of land called continents peeking through here and there. Not only can water be found in the oceans, but it also present under the ground and in vapor form in the air. Clouds formed by the vapor ensure that water falls back down to Earth as rain, sleet, snow, or hail.

So with so much water all around us, why do we hear so much about the need to conserve water? It has to do with the water's salinity, or saltiness. Ocean water has too much salt in it for us to drink. Much of the water that falls back to Earth in one form or another becomes runoff, traveling some distance over land before making its way back to one of Earth's oceans. As it travels over land, the water picks up salts and minerals from the rocks and soil and washes them into the ocean. The deposits have built up over many years, making ocean water very salty. Approximately 97% of Earth's water is salt water. The process desalination, removing salt from water, can be expensive. That leaves only about three percent to meet the needs of people, plants and animals so we can all survive. Now it's beginning to make sense that there is concern for protecting this rare and critical resource. Unfortunately, only about one third of our fresh water is even available for us to use because the rest is frozen solid in glaciers, in the snow on high mountaintops, and in the polar ice caps. So the end result is that we have only about one percent of all the water on Earth that we can use.

The fresh water that we use comes from surface water and groundwater. Surface water, just like it sounds, is water we can see in ponds, rivers, lakes and streams. Groundwater is water that seeps down into the ground and collects in the spaces between rocks and soil underground. You can find water just about anywhere on Earth if you dig far enough down into the ground.

It is important to protect our water supplies from pollution. Once water becomes polluted, it can be difficult or even impossible to clean. Chemicals, like cleaning supplies, paints, and other toxins can seep into the ground and make the water unusable. People have an obligation to dispose of waste products appropriately so that we will have plenty of fresh water to go around.

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) With so much water all around us, why is there so little water for us to use? __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2) Do you think that we should attempt to take water from the two-thirds of our fresh water supply that is frozen? Why, or why not? __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3) What is the main idea of this passage? ____________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4) Give at least one supporting detail that provides evidence for the main idea. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

5) How would inexpensive desalination techniques change our everyday lives? __________________________________________________________