Name _____

The Biggest Magnet in the World

Suppose you are lost in a snowstorm. You have a map. It shows where you are. It also shows a ranger station that's not far away.

The ranger station is north of you. If you walk north, you will get to safety. That should be easy enough. But there's a problem. You don't know which way is north. All you can see is falling snow. There's nothing to tell you which way to go.

Luckily, you have a compass in your pocket. A compass has a magnetic needle that always points north. The compass needle points the way to the ranger station.

When the compass was invented, no one knew why it worked. For hundreds of years, people tried to figure it out. They played with magnets. They knew that magnets did strange things. Two magnets could pull on each other, even when they weren't touching.

People also made some discoveries about the Earth. They found out that the Earth isn't flat like a dinner plate. The Earth is round, like a rubber ball.

Then they discovered something really strange. They discovered that the compass needle points north because the biggest magnet in the world is always pulling on it.

Do you know what the biggest magnet in the world is?

The biggest magnet in the world is the world. The planet Earth is a magnet. The giant magnetic Earth pulls on the tiny magnetic compass needle. That makes the needle point north and shows you the way to go.