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Date:

Mysteries in the Sky

If you look up at the sky on a summer night, you might be lucky enough to see a special type of cloud glowing in the darkness. These clouds are strange and rare events called noctilucent clouds (NLCs). NLCs are different from the clouds we see every day. Most clouds form near the earth's surface - usually within 10 kilometers of the ground. (24), NLCs are formed around 80 kilometers away, in a section of the sky called the mesosphere. NLCs are also colorful - generally bright blue, but sometimes red, yellow or white.

Scientists believe that, like normal clouds, NLCs are made of tiny ice crystals. However, in the mesosphere, it is usually (25). In order for ice crystals to form and create clouds, there must be water and dust for that water to stick to. NLCs are only able to form in the summer, when winds carry water up to the mesosphere from lower levels of the atmosphere.

NLCs have only appeared in recent times. In fact, the first NLCs were recorded in 1885, two years after a volcano erupted in Krakatoa, Indonesia. Scientists believe that the volcano released huge amounts of dust into the mesosphere, which allowed NLCs to form. Although this may explain why NLCs were seen after the eruption, it does not explain the NLCs that occur today. Some scientists now believe that NLCs are (26). For one thing, NLCs did not start to appear until the modern age, when carbon dioxide and other gases began to increase. For another, they are becoming more frequent and widespread as temperatures rise.

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| 21. | a. For instance | b. In contrast |
| | c. Since then | d. Even so |
| 22. | a. too warm for people to see | b. too dry for clouds to form |
| | c. too dark for scientists to study | d. too windy for normal clouds |
| 23. | a. going to disappear soon | b. caused mainly by volcanoes |
| | c. dangerous for humans | d. related to global warming |