

**THINKING CRITICALLY****● Hole in the Sky**

Ozone, the *triatomic* state of oxygen, is a pale blue gas with a strong and distinctive odor. Most ozone is in the upper atmosphere. There are no plants or animals that need ozone to survive; living things manufacture and use *molecular* oxygen. Even though ozone is not used to sustain life, it is essential for life to exist on the earth. The ozone in the upper atmosphere absorbs ultraviolet radiation from the sun and protects the earth from the radiation's harmful effects.

Scientists have discovered a hole in the ozone layer. It is located above Antarctica. The ozone layer is also very thin over the Arctic Ocean. This hole is causing great concern among scientists, because losing the ozone layer could threaten the existence of life on the earth.

**Your Turn to Think**

On your own paper write a short essay about the ozone layer's destruction. Use any available resources, such as the Internet, encyclopedias, or magazine articles for information. Your school or local public library should have these resources. As you write your essay, answer the following questions.

- When was the first ozone hole discovered?
- How large is the ozone hole now?
- Is the ozone hole permanent?
- As the ozone hole grows, how might it affect life on the earth?
- What can people do to help prevent the loss of ozone?