The earth's oceans are **colossal**, so much bigger than the land area, that they cover 70% of the surface of the earth. They give us food and minerals and are a major **constituent** in the formation of our weather. The extremes of temperature on the earth would be much greater, and many places would be too hot or too cold for humans without the oceans to act as the earth's **thermostat**.

In some ways, we know more about the stars millions of miles away than we know about the **contiguous** sea. Why? Partly because oceanography is a comparatively new science, even though the oceans have been fished and traveled by people for thousands of years. Only since World War II have scientists begun carefully to **probe** the deepest parts of the sea to find out what is there.

As our supply of fresh water becomes more and more scarce, we have naturally looked to the oceans, the greatest source of water on earth. But there is so much salt in sea water that it is not fit for human **consumption**. Scientists have been trying to find ways to turn this saline water into fresh water. Machines for the **conversion** of water are already at work in various parts of the world, but their cost is still **exorbitant**. Science will have to find much cheaper ways to do the job.

Possibilities for food **abound** in the ocean. In addition to the hundreds of varieties of fish, some kinds of seaweed can be eaten. Or **plankton** could easily be **nurtured** and harvested as a crop. So far, though, this floating mass of microscopic plants and animals is considered pretty much **inedible**. It's nutritious enough, containing many proteins, vitamins, and minerals that humans need for survival, but so far no one has been able to figure out how to **disguise** its awful taste.

What strategies did you use to make sense of the text?