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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/126/2021_2022_2006_E5_B9_B4_E8_80_83_c89_126615.htm In choosing a method for determining climatic conditions that existed in the past, paleoclimatologists invoke four principal criteria. First, the material—rocks, lakes, vegetation, etc.—on which the method relies must be (5) widespread enough to provide plenty of information, since analysis of material that is rarely encountered will not permit correlation with other regions or with other periods of geological history. Second, in the process of formation, the material must have received an environ- (10) mental signal that reflects a change in climate and that can be deciphered by modern physical or chemical means. Third, at least some of the material must have retained the signal unaffected by subsequent changes in the environment. Fourth, it must be possible to deter- (15) mine the time at which the inferred climatic conditions held. This last criterion is more easily met in dating marine sediments, because dating of only a small number of layers in a marine sequence allows the age of other layers to be estimated fairly reliably by extrapola- (20) tion and interpolation. By contrast, because sedimentation is much less continuous in continental regions, estimating the age of a continental bed from the known ages of beds above and below is more risky. One very old method used in the investigation of past (25) climatic conditions involves the measurement of water levels in ancient lakes. In temperate regions, there are enough

lakes for correlations between them to give us a reliable picture. In arid and semiarid regions , on the other hand , the small number of lakes and the great (30) distances between them reduce the possibilities for correlation. Moreover , since lake levels are controlled by rates of evaporation as well as by precipitation , the interpretation of such levels is ambiguous. For instance , the fact that lake levels in the semiarid southwestern United (35) States appear to have been higher during the last ice age than they are now was at one time attributed to increased precipitation. On the basis of snow-line elevations , however , it has been concluded that the climate then was not necessarily wetter than it is now , but rather

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