

Summary: Land and Water

Major Landforms

Natural forces shape and change the earth. Some natural forces take place underground. Slowly moving tectonic plates cause earthquakes and volcanoes. Melted rock from volcanoes can form mountains. Volcanoes created the Cascade Mountains in the northwest United States. The Rocky Mountains in the western part of North America were formed when tectonic plates pushed together. The tectonic plates broke and moved rocks deep in the earth's crust.

Land is also shaped by erosion. Wind and water carve valleys and deep canyons in rock. Wind can also blow soil away. Erosion rounded the Appalachian Mountains that run from Maine to Alabama in the eastern United States. Glaciers once covered parts of North America. They pushed soil and rocks as they moved. Moving glaciers also caused erosion. They helped shape hills, valleys, and plains.

Bodies of Water

Moving glaciers scooped soil and rocks to form basins. When the glaciers melted, some water stayed in these basins. This is how the five Great Lakes were created.

Lakes form when water enters a low area faster than it can leave. Some lakes drain out through rivers. Some water seeps into the ground. Some water evaporates into the air. The only way water can leave Utah's Great Salt Lake is by evaporating. Minerals left behind make the water salty.

Rivers form as water moves over high land to lower land. Small streams flow into larger ones. Larger streams flow into rivers. Rivers flow into the ocean. The Mississippi River is the longest in North America. It starts in Minnesota and drains into the Gulf of Mexico. Many other rivers flow into the Mississippi. The Mississippi is one of the world's busiest shipping routes.

People have always settled near rivers. Rivers bring water for drinking and farming. Rivers provide transportation. Flowing water runs machines.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

tectonic plate *noun*, a huge slab of slowly moving rock beneath the earth's crust

erosion *noun*, a process of wearing away rock and soil

glacier *noun*, a huge mass of slowly moving ice

basin *noun*, an area with a low center surrounded by higher land



After You Read

REVIEW **What forces can shape the land?** Highlight six forces that can shape the land.

REVIEW **In what way did glaciers create the Great Lakes?** As glaciers moved, they scooped up soil and rocks. What did this create? Draw a box around the paragraph that tells the answer.