

CONTINENTS AND OCEANS

The Theory

Geologists, scientists who study the makeup of the earth, have a theory that millions of years ago, there was just one continent named Pangaea. Pangaea split into two plates and slowly spread apart to the present positions. This is called **continental drift**. This movement continues today but it is not felt because it is less than one inch per year.



The Continents

There are seven continents. Each continent is a part of each of the seven continents. **continental drift**

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are underwater
filled the

- **Asia** is the largest continent. It is 17,000,000 square miles, about one third of the earth's land surface. It includes China, India, Russia and many more countries. The tallest mountain in the world is Mt. Everest at 29,000 feet above sea level. Asia has the lowest spot on earth, The Dead Sea, which is about 1300 feet below sea level. Temperatures can be as high as 120 degrees F in the southwestern parts and 90 below freezing in the northern parts of Asia.
- **Africa** has 53 countries in 12,000,000 square miles. Most of Africa is in the tropics. The Sahara is the largest desert in the world. It is a desert of vast plains and rocky boulders. The Nile is the longest river. It is more than 4000 miles long. Africa has many plateaus, wide flat areas that rise up from the sea so there are not many harbors. Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa. Some countries in Africa are Egypt, Kenya, Libya, and Ethiopia.

- **North America** is 9,000,000 square miles. It is made up of Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central America, Greenland and Iceland. Lake Superior is the largest freshwater lake in the world. Greenland is the largest island.
- **South America** is 7,000,000 square miles. It includes the countries of Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador and others. Most of the continent is in the tropics but because it is about 4700 miles long, it has every kind of climate. On the western coast are the Andes Mountains. The Amazon River is the second longest river in the world. South America exports many minerals to the rest of the world. One fourth of the world's iron ore comes from Brazil. Silver, gold, copper, tin, emeralds, and diamonds are plentiful. The Amazon rain forest is the largest in the world. Portuguese and Spanish are the predominant languages.
- **Antarctica** is 5,000,000 square miles of land covered by a polar ice cap as deep as 2 miles. It has no countries. It includes the South Pole where it is too cold for people to live. There is a U.S. research station at the South Pole. The lowest temperature is below zero. There are no rivers or lakes. There are only plants that can grow in the summer.
- **Europe** is a continent. Some geographers call it **Eurasia**. Some geographers call it **Eurasia**. Some geographers call it **Eurasia**.
- **Australia** is the smallest continent with less than 3,000,000 square miles. The capital of Australia is Canberra. The first settlers came to Australia around 1800. The Aborigines were the first inhabitants and many still retain their stone age customs today. There are no high mountains or deep valleys. There are more than 40 different kinds of kangaroos in Australia. There are duckbilled platypus, dingoes, emus, and kookaburra living in here. Australia is sometimes referred to as **Oceania** which includes New Zealand and part of New Guinea.



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The Oceans

There are four major oceans which cover more than two thirds of the world.



- **Atlantic** -33,000,000 sq. miles - 11,370 feet average depth. Its deepest place is off the coast of Puerto Rico where it is more than 30,000 feet deep. The Atlantic may have been named for the ancient city of **Atlantis** which is said to have been suddenly swallowed up by the sea ages ago. At its widest point between the Strait of Gibraltar and Florida it is 4000 miles wide. The **Gulf Stream** current carries warm water from the tropics along the eastern shore of America and turns northeast toward Europe.
- **Pacific**- 64,000,000 sq. miles - 11,370 feet average depth. The deepest area, called the Mariana Trench, is 36,000 feet deep. It is the warmest ocean. There are many volcanoes and mountains.
- **Indian** - 29,000,000 sq. miles - average depth of 12,000 ft. Most of the Indian Ocean lies south of the equator. It touches Asia, Australia, Antarctica and Africa.
- **Arctic** - 5,000,000 sq. miles - average depth of 3400 ft. It is the Northwest Passage from Asia to Europe. It is an ice cap which includes the North Pole. The salt content is lower than the other oceans.



PREVIEW

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Try this!

Look on a globe or map of the world. Find each of the continents. Find each of the oceans.