How Volcanoes Form

Name: _____ Date: _____



Deep below your feet, it is so hot that some rock melts. This melted rock is called magma. Magma is lighter than the solid rock around it, so it slowly rises toward the surface, the way a bubble rises in water.

Earth's outer shell is broken into giant pieces called plates. They move very slowly, only a few inches a year, about as fast as your fingernails grow. Many volcanoes form where two plates pull apart or where one plate slides under another. So many volcanoes circle the Pacific Ocean that this area is called the Ring of Fire.

When magma reaches the surface, it is called lava. Some volcanoes, like the ones in Hawaii, ooze rivers of runny lava. Others explode. In 1980, Mount St. Helens in Washington State blew off the top of the mountain and sent a cloud of ash miles into the sky.

Volcanoes can be dangerous, but they also build new land. Over millions of years, lava from volcanoes on the ocean floor formed the Hawaiian Islands. Volcanic ash also makes rich soil, so farmers often grow crops near old volcanoes.

1 WHAT? **What is magma called when it reaches the surface?**

ash lava plates

2 **Draw a line from each word to its meaning.**

magma	melted rock on the surface
plates	plants grown by farmers
lava	melted rock under the ground
crops	giant moving pieces of Earth's shell

3 **Read each sentence. Circle True or False.**

Earth's plates move a few miles each day.	True	False
Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980.	True	False
Volcanoes can build new land.	True	False

4 WHY? **Why do farmers often grow crops near old volcanoes?**

_____

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Answer Key



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