

# Environmental Science AMI 1

## Drifting Continents

The Earth's crust moves. Most of the time, we do not feel the movements. An earthquake is a sudden, violent shaking of the Earth. In California, there is at least one earthquake every week. Earthquakes are caused by a shifting of pieces of the Earth's crust.

Most earthquakes are so small that only scientists notice them. However, every 50 to 100 years or so, a big one comes along and does a lot of damage.

A geologist is a scientist who studies rocks to learn about the history and structure of the Earth. Geologists also study the movements of the Earth's crust and what causes them.

Most geologist think that all the continents were once part of one big supercontinent called Pangaea. About 200 million years ago, pieces of land began breaking free from Pangaea. These landmasses came together and separated many times. Eventually they drifted to the positions they are in today.

Plate tectonics is the scientific theory that states that the Earth's crust is made up of plates that slowly shift position. A plate is a large piece of the Earth's crust. The movement of these plates causes earthquakes.

1. What is an earthquake?

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2. What causes an earthquake to occur?

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3. What do geologist do?

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4. What is Pangaea?

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5. What is plate tectonics?

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