

Mountains by Ruth Thomson

A mountain is a very high hill. Its sides are often steep and rocky. Some mountains have a pointed top called a peak.

The air becomes cooler and clearer as you climb a mountain. At the top, it is very cold and windy.

Mountains of the world

Mountains cover more than a quarter of the Earth. Many are part of a group called a range. Some mountain ranges stretch for hundreds of miles.

How are mountains made?

The Earth has a crust of rock. This is broken into massive pieces called plates which have gaps between them. These move very, very slowly on top of hot liquid rock called magma. The plates fit together like jigsaw pieces.

Millions of years ago, the plates crashed into each other. Some of the rocky crust was pushed upwards to form mountains.

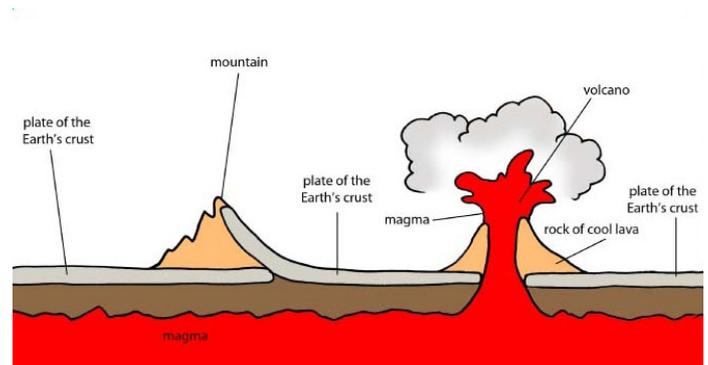
Volcanoes

Some mountains are formed by volcanoes. Magma from deep in the Earth erupts through a crack in the Earth's crust.

Dust and smoke, and hot rocks called lava, burst into the air when a volcano erupts.

The hole in a volcano is called its crater.

When the lava cools, it hardens into hard rock. Layers of rock build up to form a cone-shaped mountain.



Changing shape

Water and ice slowly change the shape of mountains. Rain falls into cracks in the rocks. At night, the water freezes. The ice splits open the rocks, and pieces fall off.

Rivers of ice called glaciers slide down some mountains. They move a few metres every year. The moving ice wears away the rock on the mountain sides.