



Name _____

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The Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is one of the world's great natural wonders. It extends about 277 miles through northern Arizona. The Colorado River begins in the Rocky Mountains of northern Colorado. It flows for 1,450 miles through the base of the canyon it carved. It eventually empties into the Gulf of California, which is a part of the Pacific Ocean. It took this river billions of years to form the Grand Canyon. Slowly, it wore away the rock, exposing ancient rocks and fossil specimens. Rocks at the base are two billion years old, among the oldest found on Earth.

The Grand Canyon is more than a mile deep in some places. In width, it varies from four to eighteen miles. The top of the canyon is

mostly flat. It is covered with a forest of oak, spruce, and pine trees. A few bushes and small pines cling to the walls of the cliffs. Bushes dot the canyon floor. Many different animals live in the Grand Canyon, including mountain lions, bighorn sheep, mule deer, and bobcats.

The Grand Canyon was the site of two different mountain ranges that rose and were worn away during the long period of its existence. At times, ancient seas flowed in from the oceans. The rock walls contain remains of **prehistoric** plants and animals from both land and sea. For scientists studying Earth's natural history, the Grand Canyon is a giant laboratory.

Check Your Understanding

1. Which of the following statements would *not* be relevant information about the Grand Canyon?
 - a. The Grand Canyon was first explored by John Wesley Powell.
 - b. The Colorado River can pick up rocks as large as cars.
 - c. The Colorado River keeps digging deeper into the canyon floor.
 - d. There are canyons in several states.
2. From the context of the passage, what is the best meaning of **prehistoric**?
 - a. older than 200 years
 - b. older than the history of man's life on Earth
 - c. before 1,500 CE
 - d. older than your parents
3. Which of the following sentences is a topic sentence?
 - a. The Grand Canyon is one of the world's great natural wonders.
 - b. The top of the canyon is mostly flat.
 - c. The rock walls contain remains of prehistoric plants and animals from both land and sea.
 - d. At times, ancient seas flowed in from the oceans.
4. What is the oldest age of rocks in the Grand Canyon?

a. 4.6 billion years old	c. 2,000 years old
b. two billion years old	d. 200 years old

