

Our Changing Continent

An introduction to plate tectonics.

A Free Electronic Field Trip (Grades 4-9)
April 2, 2003, Noon-1:00 PM ET.

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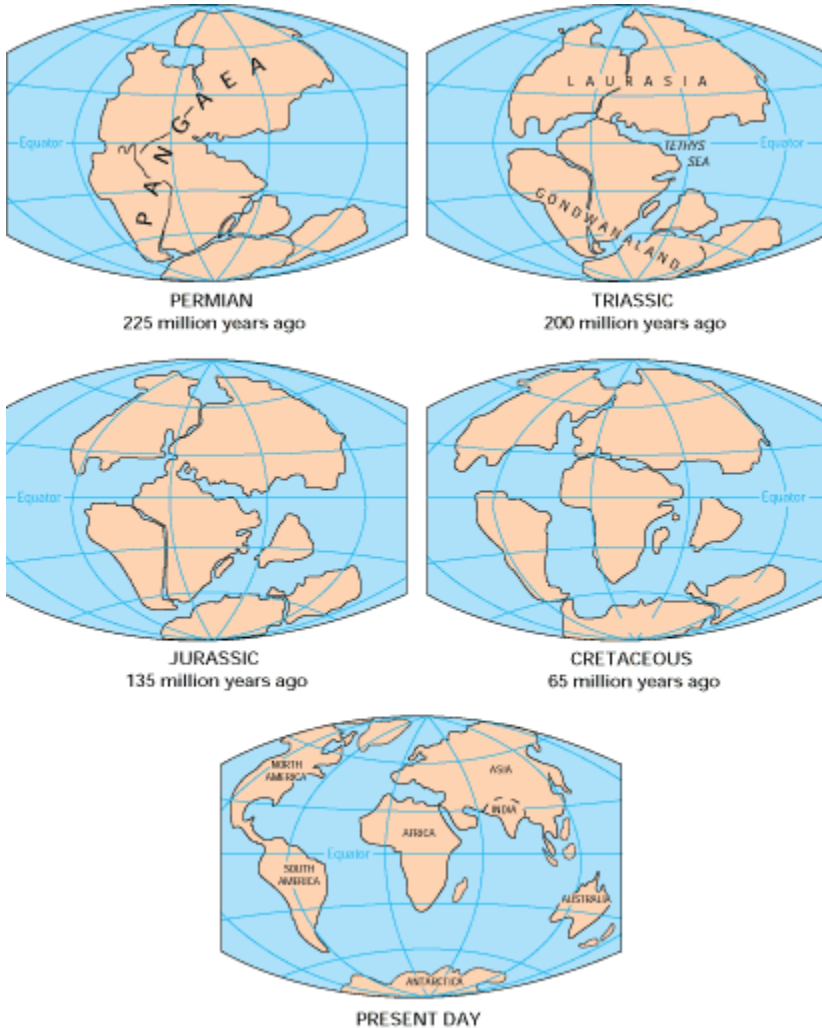
North American Continent

The Earth has undergone a cycle of continental coming together and pulling apart. Supercontinents such as Kenorland, Rodinia, and Pangaea have formed over the millennia. Continental plates have also drifted and broken up as they have slid across the mantle.

The present configuration of North America has taken shape over billions of years and is the result of repeated tectonic cycles of addition and subtraction. To a lesser degree, erosion has also played a part in creating the recognizable shape of North America.

One fact that stands out to the student of earth science is the unique difference between the eastern continental margin and the western continental margin. By examining the earth forces that has led to the current topography in each case, we will gain insight into the fundamentals of the most important concept of Earth Science: plate tectonics.

The breakup about 225-200 million years ago eventually fragmenting into the continents we know today.



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