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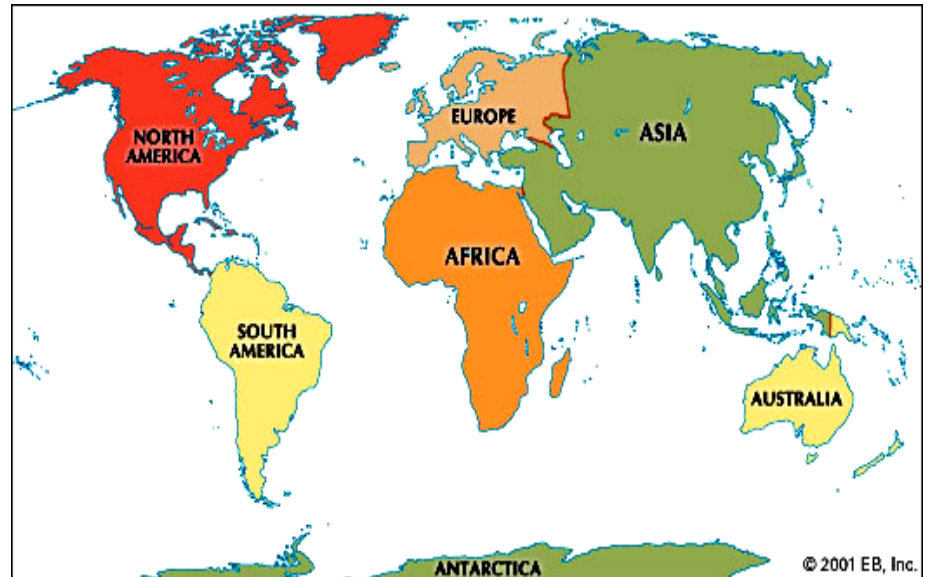
Pangaea and the Drifting Continents

Have you ever looked at the map of the world and noticed that some of the continents look like jigsaw pieces that have somehow separated? Why do you think that might be?

Some people thought that maybe the missing puzzle pieces were continents that

had sunk into the sea. One person, named Alfred Wegener, came up with the idea that millions of years ago, all of the continents were actually part of one supercontinent, named Pangaea. This supercontinent had broken up and the continents very slowly moved apart over time (to where they are now) because of something called continental drift.

At first, people thought Alfred Wegener was crazy! How could huge continents move thousands of kilometers? But, as the years passed, the scientific community found more and more evidence to support his hypothesis.



Today this hypothesis is known as the theory of plate tectonics. This theory says that the Earth's crust is actually made up of sections, called plates, which are floating on top of the hot, thick mantle below. Each of our continents is sitting on top of these plates, moving with them like on piggyback.

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1. Describe the theory of plate tectonics.

2. Fossils of tropical trees and animals have been found in Antarctica. That continent is now almost completely covered in ice. How is it possible for these fossils to be found there?

3. A large amount of gold was found on the west coast of Africa. Using the theory of plate tectonics, where else in the world are you likely to find gold?
