

A Grand Old Canyon

by Linda Ruggieri



Canyons are deep valleys surrounded by rocky cliffs. One of the most famous canyons in the world is in the Arizona desert in the United States. It is called the Grand Canyon.

The Grand Canyon stretches for 277 miles. That is a long distance! If you were in a car traveling at highway speed, it would take you about five hours to go that far.

The cliffs of the Grand Canyon are made of brown, red, and yellow rocks and sand. It is one mile from the top of the cliffs to the floor of the canyon. The Colorado River flows along the canyon floor.

Nature has shaped the Grand Canyon. For millions of years, scientists say, wind and water hit the canyon's rocks and sand. Strong winds blew on the cliffs. Rain and river water wore down the rocks. Together, the wind and water created the canyon we see today.

Even today, wind and water continue to change the canyon by reshaping the rocks and battering the cliffs. The change is very slow, but it never stops. A million years from now, the Grand Canyon will look very different.

A Grand Old Canyon

by Linda Ruggieri (Adapted by ReadWorks)



A canyon is a deep valley with tall, rocky sides. These sides, called cliffs, surround the valley. One of the most famous canyons in the world is the Grand Canyon. It is in the desert in the state of Arizona.

The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long. That is really long! A car moving very quickly would take about five hours to go that distance.

The cliffs of the Grand Canyon are made of rocks and sand. The rocks and sand are brown, red, and yellow. The distance from the top of the cliffs to the bottom of the canyon is one mile. The bottom of the canyon is called the floor. The Colorado River flows along the floor of the Grand Canyon.

Nature has shaped the Grand Canyon. For millions of years, scientists say that wind and water hit the canyon's rocks and sand. Strong winds blew on the cliffs. Rain and water wore down the rocks. Together, the wind and water made the canyon we see today.

Even today, wind and water are changing the shape of the canyon. They are reshaping the rocks and cliffs. The change is happening very slowly, but it never stops. A million years from now, the Grand Canyon will look very different.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What are canyons?

- A. rushing water that flows between rocky cliffs
- B. cliffs made of brown, red, and yellow rocks and sand
- C. deep valleys surrounded by rocky cliffs

2. What does the article explain?

- A. how to get from the top of the Grand Canyon to the bottom
- B. how scientists have gathered information about the Grand Canyon
- C. how the Grand Canyon we see today was created

3. "A million years from now, the Grand Canyon will look very different."

What evidence from the article supports this statement?

- A. "Even today, wind and water continue to change the canyon by reshaping the rocks and battering the cliffs."
- B. "For millions of years, scientists say, wind and water hit the canyon's rocks and sand."
- C. "The cliffs of the Grand Canyon are made of brown, red, and yellow rocks and sand."

4. Why might the Grand Canyon be one of the most famous canyons in the world?

- A. It stretches over a long distance.
- B. It was made by nature.
- C. It will look very different a million years from now.

5. What is the main idea of the article?

- A. Canyons are deep valleys surrounded by rocky cliffs that can be made of brown, red, and yellow rocks.
- B. It is one mile from the top of the Grand Canyon to the bottom, where the Colorado River flows.
- C. The Grand Canyon is a long, famous canyon that was shaped by nature over millions of years.

6. Read this paragraph from the article.

"The Grand Canyon stretches for 277 miles. That is a long distance! If you were in a car traveling at highway speed, it would take you about five hours to go that far."

Why does the author tell readers how long it would take to go 277 miles by car?

- A. to help readers understand how long the Grand Canyon is
- B. to convince readers that driving is a better way to get somewhere than walking
- C. to encourage readers to drive to the Grand Canyon and see it for themselves

7. The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long and one mile tall, _____ it is longer than it is tall.

- A. so
- B. because
- C. but

8. What are the cliffs of the Grand Canyon made of?

9. Explain how wind and water shaped the Grand Canyon we see today. Support your answer with evidence from the article.

10. "A million years from now, the Grand Canyon will look very different."

What might the Grand Canyon look like a million years from now? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

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The cliffs of the Grand Canyon are made of brown, red, and yellow rocks and sand.

9. Explain how wind and water shaped the Grand Canyon we see today. Support your answer with evidence from the article.

Students should recognize that the Grand Canyon was created by wind and water hitting and wearing down the rocks and sand of the canyon.

10. "A million years from now, the Grand Canyon will look very different."

What might the Grand Canyon look like a million years from now? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

Answers may vary as long as they are supported by the article. For example, students may infer that the Grand Canyon will be even deeper and longer in a million years than it is now. The canyon we see today has been formed for millions of years from the force of wind and water wearing away its rocks and sand; because wind and water continue to reshape the canyon, they will likely wear away even more rock and sand to expand the size and depth of the valley between the canyon's cliffs.