

What Glaciers Leave Behind

Cross-Curricular Focus: Earth Science



Glaciers are like huge mountains of moving ice. Many years ago, the movement of glaciers across our landscapes slowly made some changes to Earth's surface. Ice is heavy. When a glacier moves it can damage the ground that it is moving over. It can push rocks and soil in front of it as it moves. A glacier can also drag the rocks and soil with it as it travels. In time, the ice gradually melts.

There are many places on Earth that haven't had any glaciers for many years. However, land formations are evidence that there was ice there at one time. A **moraine** is a rut in the ground that is lined with small rocks and debris. It was formed by a slow-moving glacier that scraped the ground as it moved. The glacier dropped small rocks as it melted. An **erratic** is a large boulder left behind after a glacier has melted. A huge stone boulder can also be called a **monolith**. A **cirque** is an area that is rounded out like a bowl.

Sometimes the changes in the landscape caused by glaciers can be beautiful. The U.S. national parks are home to many of these natural wonders. When the government chose which land to protect and preserve its natural condition, the areas with sculptured landscapes were the first choices. By including them in national parks, the government protected them for future generations to see.

California's Yosemite (yo-SEM-it-tee) Valley is one of the best examples of how glaciers can transform a landscape. Nearly all of the lakes in the Yosemite Valley were formed by glaciers. The glaciers melted after cirques had been formed by the slow-moving giants. As the ice melted, the water settled in the bowl instead of running off across the land. There are also many examples of erratics and moraines scattered throughout the Yosemite National Park.

Visitors come to Yosemite and other national parks by the thousands. They want to see what glaciers have left behind. It's interesting that leftovers can be so picturesque.

Name: _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) What is the main idea of this passage?

2) What can happen when the glacier melts in a cirque?

3) What is the author mean by "slow-moving giant"?

4) Based on the content of the passage, what do you think the word picturesque means in the last line of the passage?

5) Explain how a moraine is formed.

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Name: Key

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

Actual wording of answers may vary.

1) What is the main idea of this passage?

Glaciers can change the way the land looks.

2) What can happen when the glacier melts in a cirque?

It forms a lake.

3) What is the author mean by "slow-moving giant"?

a glacier

4) Based on the content of the passage, what do you think the word picturesque means in the last line of the passage?

Example: interesting to look at

5) Explain how a moraine is formed.

A slow-moving glacier scraped the ground.