Wild Landscapes

Directions: Read the passage below. Then answer the short-response questions that follow.

Natural Wonders of North America

North America is filled with natural wonders that show how powerful and varied the continent's landscapes can be. In the far northwest, volcanoes rise across parts of Alaska and the Pacific Coast. Some of these volcanoes are active, meaning they can still erupt. Others are dormant and have not erupted for thousands of years. Their shapes and lava layers reveal how the continent has changed over time.

Farther north, huge glaciers slowly move across cold regions of Alaska and northern Canada. These giant sheets of ice carve valleys, shape mountains, and create deep lakes as they travel. Even though glaciers move slowly, they are strong enough to reshape the land beneath them.

In contrast, deserts in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico are hot, dry environments where plants and animals have adapted to survive. Cacti store water, and many desert animals stay underground during the hottest part of the day. These deserts show how life can adjust to harsh conditions.

North America is also home to thick forests that cover large areas. From the tall pine forests of Canada to the lush rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, these forests provide homes for countless species of animals. Forests help clean the air, protect soil, and support important ecosystems.

Together, volcanoes, glaciers, deserts, and forests show how diverse and powerful the natural world is across North America.

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Comprehension Questions

1. What is one way volcanoes help scientists understand how North America has changed over time?

2. How do glaciers shape the land around them?

3. What is one adaptation that helps plants or animals survive in desert environments?

4. Why are forests important to North American ecosystems?

5. Based on the passage, how do the natural wonders of North America show the continent's diversity?

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