

The Interior Lowlands

Name _____

Where is it?

The Interior Lowlands of the United States lie in a vast grassy expanse between the Appalachian Mountains and the Great Plains. Over a dozen states contain at least a part of this region, including Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The Lowlands stretch from the Coastal Plain at its southernmost edge to Canada.

How was it formed?

While dramatic tectonic plate movements formed the features of the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains to the east and to the west, the Interior Lowlands are, in contrast, characterized by 600 million years of little geologic activity. Above the tectonic plate, an ancient bed of crystalline rocks lies under deep layers of sedimentary rock. In the southern region of the Interior Lowlands, silt blown in by the wind settled in fertile layers on the sedimentary rock. On the northern edge, glaciers carved the basins of the Great Lakes. As glaciers formed and receded over millions of years, their melting runoff formed streams and rivers.

Agriculture

The fertile soil of the Interior Lowlands has long been used for agriculture. Native Americans such as the Omaha developed and traded many varieties of corn in this region. The majority of agricultural land in the Interior Lowlands today is used to grow corn and soybeans. Although climate change is lengthening growing seasons for farmers, increases in the frequency of cataclysmic events such as floods, heat waves, and droughts in the Lowlands threaten agricultural stability.

Natural Resources

This region is also rich in natural resources. Sandstone deposits provide sand that is used as a raw material in glass production. Salt and limestone are found in the northern portion of the region. Petroleum from oil fields in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas is used for the production of motor oil and jet fuel. The Interior Lowlands are an important physiographic region whose vast resources, both agricultural and mineral, are used by millions of people.

1. Which state was NOT listed as one of the states that contain the Interior Lowlands?

- a. Illinois
- b. Colorado
- c. Ohio
- d. Indiana

2. What formed the rivers and streams in the northern area of the Interior Lowlands?

- a. The Great Lakes
- b. Runoff from glaciers
- c. Runoff from the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains
- d. Extreme flooding events

3. Why is the farmland in the Lowlands so fertile?

- a. The wind deposits new soil on the land
- b. The soil has not eroded away
- c. Runoff from glaciers deposited new soil
- d. The land has long been fertilized by people

4. What effect has climate change had on agriculture in the Interior Lowlands?

- a. Colder winters kill crops
- b. Warmer summers allow more crops to grow
- c. More precipitation has produced healthier crops
- d. Longer growing seasons for crops

5. Based on the following sentence, what is the best synonym for the word “cataclysmic”?

“Although climate change is lengthening growing seasons for farmers, increases in the frequency of cataclysmic events such as floods, heat waves, and droughts in the Lowlands threaten agricultural stability”

- a. destructive
- b. random
- c. surprising
- d. sad

6. Which of the following was not identified as a natural resource from this region?

- a. glass
- b. sand
- c. limestone
- d. petroleum

Answers:

1. B

2. B

3. A

4. D

5. A

6. A