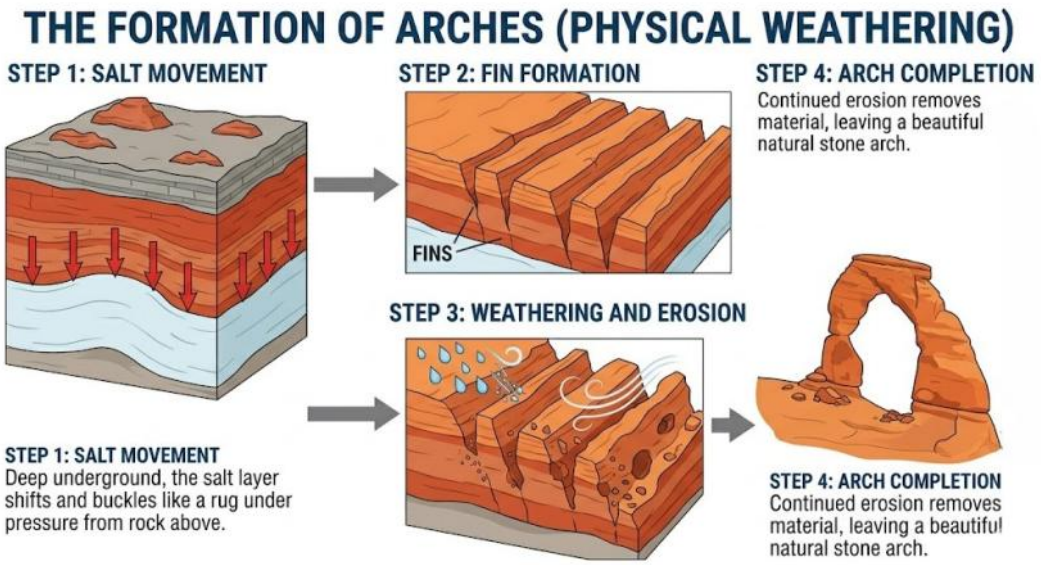
Name:_____

The Red Rock Wonders: Arches National Park

Arches National Park, located near Moab in eastern Utah, is a land of massive red rocks and giant natural sculptures. It has the highest density of natural stone arches in the world, with over 2,000 of them spread across the park! These arches look like giant doorways or windows carved into the orange sandstone. The most famous one is called Delicate Arch. It is so tall that a four-story building could fit right underneath it.

Sandstone arch

You might wonder how these heavy stone arches stay standing without falling down. The secret lies in the ground. Deep beneath the park is a thick layer of salt. Over millions of years, the weight of the rocks above pushed down on the salt, causing it to shift and buckle like a rug being pushed across a floor. This movement caused the rock layers on top to crack and break into long, thin walls called "fins." When water and wind hit these fins, they wore away the softest parts of the rock first, leaving behind the beautiful arches we see today.



The park is a high desert environment, which means it can be very dry and windy. Because there is so little water, many plants have special ways to survive. For example, some mosses look like dry, black crust on the dirt, but they turn green and spring to life as soon as it rains. Animals like the desert cottontail and the collared lizard also live here. They often hide in the shade of the tall rocks during the hottest part of the day to keep cool.

Collared Lizard

Arches became a national monument on April 12, 1929, and was officially changed to a national park on November 12, 1971. It is a place that is constantly changing. In fact, new arches are still being formed today, while old ones slowly crumble and fall. Park rangers ask visitors to "leave no trace," which means keeping the park clean so the red rock wonders stay beautiful for a long time.

1. Which sentence best describes the main idea of the passage?

a. Delicate Arch is the most famous arch in the state of Utah.

b. Arches National Park is a unique place with thousands of stone arches and interesting nature.

c. Mosses in the desert look like black crust until it rains.

d. Over 2,000 stone arches have been counted by park rangers.

2. According to the second paragraph, what is the first step in the formation of an arch?

a. Wind and rain wear away the softest parts of the sandstone.

b. The government protects the land as a national monument.

c. A deep layer of salt underground shifts and buckles.

d. The fins of rock slowly crumble and fall to the ground.

3. Why do animals like the collared lizard hide in the shade during the afternoon?

a. They are trying to hide from the desert cottontail.

b. They are waiting for the moss to turn green.

c. They need to stay out of the wind to protect their skin.

d. They are trying to keep cool in the hot desert environment.

4. Based on the passage, what can you infer about the arches in the park?

a. They will look exactly the same a thousand years from now.

b. They are very easy to build if you have enough sandstone.

c. They are slowly but surely changing because of nature.

d. They were all carved by the people who lived there long ago.

5. Read this sentence: "The lizard likes to spring into action when it sees a bug." Which sentence uses the word spring in the same way?

a. My favorite season is spring because of the flowers.

b. The water from the mountain spring was very cold.

c. I felt the metal spring inside my old mattress.

d. The cat will spring onto the toy mouse.

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