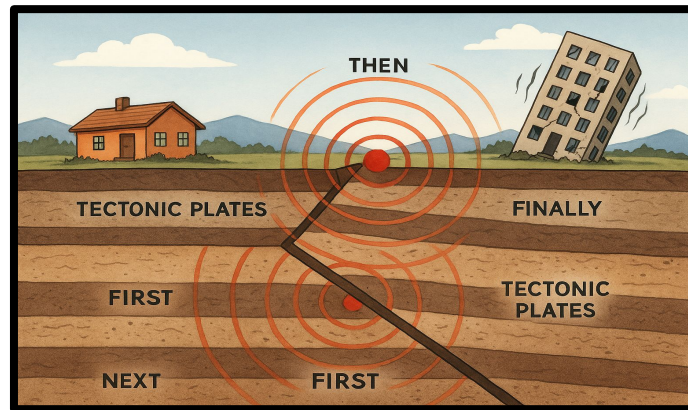


# Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Structure

Read the short story and answer each question.



## How Earthquakes Happen

Earthquakes can shake the ground without warning, causing buildings to crack and roads to split. They are sudden, but the reasons behind them begin deep underground.

The Earth's outer layer is made of huge pieces called **tectonic plates**. These plates are always moving—very slowly. Sometimes, they push against each other or slide past one another. When the plates get stuck, **pressure builds up**.

Eventually, the pressure becomes too strong. The plates suddenly shift, and the energy that's been stored underground is released as an **earthquake**. This causes the ground to shake, sometimes for only a few seconds, and sometimes for much longer.

**First**, the energy travels in waves. **Then**, those waves move upward and outward from the center, called the **epicenter**. **Next**, the shaking may cause buildings to collapse or roads to crack. **Finally**, aftershocks—smaller quakes—can happen minutes or even hours later.

The effects of an earthquake depend on how strong it is and how close people are to the epicenter. Some earthquakes are barely felt. Others cause damage to homes, bridges, and even mountainsides.

Scientists study earthquakes to understand how they work and to help cities prepare. **As a result**, buildings in some areas are designed to sway, not break, when the ground moves.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## How Earthquakes Happen

1. What causes an earthquake to begin?

- A. Tectonic plates shift after too much pressure builds up
- B. Storms blow water onto the land
- C. Volcanoes erupt near cities
- D. The sun heats up the ground too quickly

2. How does the author show the order in which an earthquake spreads?

- A. By using sequence words like "first," "next," and "finally"
- B. By describing each type of rock
- C. By listing the tallest mountains
- D. By writing a story about a volcano

3. Fill in the blank:

The center of the earthquake where energy first escapes is called the \_\_\_\_\_.

4. How do the author's cause-and-effect sentences help explain what starts an earthquake?

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5. Why does the author include the sequence of how an earthquake spreads?

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# Parent and Teacher Guide

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**Guide Reading Level:** P

**Lexile Level:** 645L-795L

**Grade Level:** 3rd Grade, End of the Year

**Genre:** Informational / Earth Science

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## Introducing the Text

"Today we'll read a nonfiction passage about how earthquakes happen. As we read, we'll identify both the causes of earthquakes and the sequence of events that follow. We'll also look for clue words that help us understand the logical connections between sentences and paragraphs."

**Vocabulary:** tectonic plates, pressure, epicenter, aftershock, energy

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## Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever heard of an earthquake?
  2. What do you think causes the ground to shake?
  3. Why might it be important to understand how earthquakes work?
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## During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What causes the plates to shift?
  2. What happens first when an earthquake begins?
  3. What clue words show the order of events?
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## After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does the author use cause and effect to explain why earthquakes happen?
  2. Why is the sequence of events important in understanding how earthquakes spread?
  3. What part of the passage helped you learn something new?
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## Activity Idea

Have students create an "Earthquake Sequence Poster" showing the steps from pressure buildup to aftershocks. Include labels, arrows, and short sentences describing each part. Then write a short paragraph explaining one cause and one effect from the passage.

