

Study Guide: Mountain Building

Introduction

Mountains are majestic landforms that rise high above the surrounding terrain. They are formed through various geological processes, primarily driven by plate tectonics. Understanding mountain building is essential in comprehending Earth's dynamic nature and the forces that shape its surface.

Types of Mountains

There are three main types of mountains:

- **Fold Mountains:** These mountains form when two tectonic plates collide, causing the rock layers to fold and buckle. The Himalayas and the Alps are examples of fold mountains.
- **Fault-Block Mountains:** These mountains form when tectonic plates move apart or slide past each other, causing large blocks of rock to uplift or tilt. The Sierra Nevada and the Basin and Range Province are examples of fault-block mountains.
- **Volcanic Mountains:** These mountains form when magma erupts from the Earth's surface and cools, forming layers of lava and ash. Mount Fuji and Mount Rainier are examples of volcanic mountains.

Plate Tectonics and Mountain Building

Plate tectonics is the theory that Earth's outer layer is made up of large plates that move and interact with each other. The movement of these plates is responsible for most mountain building.

- **Convergent Plate Boundaries:** When two plates collide, they can either push up against each other to form fold mountains or one plate can slide under the other (subduction), leading to the formation of volcanic mountains.
- **Divergent Plate Boundaries:** When two plates move apart, they can create rift valleys and fault-block mountains.
- **Transform Plate Boundaries:** When two plates slide past each other horizontally, they can cause earthquakes and uplift, which can also contribute to mountain building.

Geological Processes

Several geological processes are involved in mountain building:

- **Folding:** The bending and wrinkling of rock layers due to compressional forces.

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Charles C. Plummer,David McGeary

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