

Past-paper walk-through

Plate Tectonics ■ 4.1

eXercise

Questions in this set

- 2025 Set 2 Q2
- 2014 Q3

Reading the mark scheme

- **B1** a mark that stands on its own – the point is either made or not.
- **M1** a *method* mark: the right approach, even if the number is wrong.
- **A1** an *answer* mark, and it usually needs its M mark first.
- **C1** a working mark on the way to the answer.
- **//** separates answers the examiner accepts equally.
- **ecf** = error carried forward: a later part is marked on your own earlier answer.
- **owtte** = “or words to that effect” – the wording need not match.

Question 2

2025 Set 2 ■ Q2

Serengeti National Park is located in Tanzania, Africa. The park is located in a valley along a tectonic plate boundary called the East African Rift. Figure 1 shows the East African Rift and other plate boundaries near the east coast of Africa.

Figure 1. Tectonic Plate Movement near East Coast of Africa

[Map figure showing tectonic plates near the east coast of Africa. Labels: “Arabian Plate” (north-central), “African Plate” (west), “Indian Plate” (east), “Lake Victoria” (small lake, west, with an arrow pointing away from it/west), “Western Rift Valley” and “Eastern Rift Valley” (two branching rift lines running north-south through the African Plate), “Serengeti National Park” (marked at the point where the Western and Eastern Rift Valleys meet), “Indian Ocean” (to the east). Bold arrows show direction of plate movement: one arrow points west/away from Lake Victoria area, one arrow points southeast from the rift valley junction, and a double-headed arrow (pointing

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Figure 2. Annual Migration of Wildebeest in Serengeti National Park

[Circular diagram showing the annual wildebeest migration route around Serengeti National Park, with a wildebeest icon and arrows connecting labelled month boxes in a loop: June → July → August → September → October (near "Ikorongo Game

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(a) Based on the information in Figure 1, **identify** the type of plate boundary that runs beneath Serengeti National Park.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(b) Based on the information provided, **identify** the dominant biome within the Serengeti.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(c) Wildebeest give birth to their young when new grasses are growing. Based on the information in Figure 2, **identify** the location in the Serengeti where wildebeest are most likely to give birth.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(d) The Serengeti has two primary types of grasses: long and short. The two grass types provide similar levels of nutrition for animals. Wildebeest primarily consume long grasses, while other herbivores such as gazelle consume the short grasses. These two similar species coexist in Serengeti National Park.

Explain why resource partitioning allows for the coexistence of the wildebeest and the gazelle in the Serengeti.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(e) The Tanzanian government plans to build a highway across the northern portion of the Serengeti, as shown in Figure 2.

Describe one way the planned highway shown in Figure 2 could negatively affect the wildebeest population in the Serengeti.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(f) Propose a solution to the negative effect created by the planned highway described in part E.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(g) Many organisms live in grasslands. One weed species, the spotted knapweed, was introduced at one location in North America in the 1890s and is currently found throughout the rangelands of the western United States. The spotted knapweed poses several environmental problems in North America. Farmers often use crop rotation to control populations of pests like the spotted knapweed. A more traditional method of controlling pests involves spraying pesticides.

Describe a characteristic of an invasive species, such as the spotted knapweed, that allows them to outcompete native species.

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(h) Justify the use of crop rotation as an environmental solution by providing an additional advantage, other than controlling pest populations.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(i) Describe an environmental problem associated with controlling pest populations with large amounts of pesticide.

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Respond to parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

(j) Propose a solution to controlling pests, other than pesticides or crop rotation.

Solution 2

(a)

Mark scheme

- Divergent (boundary) - the plate boundary running beneath Serengeti National Park (part of the East African Rift) is a divergent boundary. 1 point for identifying it as divergent.

Solution 2

(b)

Mark scheme

- The dominant biome within the Serengeti is savanna (tropical grassland). 1 point for identifying savanna/tropical grassland.

Solution 2

(c)

Mark scheme

- Wildebeest are most likely to give birth in the Grumeti Game Reserve, i.e. the west/northwestern side/edge of Serengeti National Park, where new grasses are growing (per Figure 2). 1 point for identifying this location.

Solution 2

(d)

Mark scheme

- Resource partitioning allows wildebeest (which eat long grasses) and gazelle (which eat short grasses) to coexist because it reduces the negative impact of competition for limited resources - each species uses the shared, limited resource (grass) in a different way (different grass types), so they are not competing directly for the exact same food source. 1 point for explaining this reduced-competition mechanism.

Solution 2

(e)

Mark scheme

- One way the planned highway could negatively affect the wildebeest population: building the highway would fragment/destroy habitat, food, or resources; the highway could prevent, reduce, or disturb migration; wildebeest could be hit/killed by vehicles; or noise pollution from the highway could cause stress or change migratory routes. 1 point for any one valid negative effect.

Solution 2

(f) Mark scheme

- A realistic solution must correspond to the problem identified in part E. If habitat fragmentation/destruction was described: construct a habitat corridor over/under the highway, construct the highway over/above the habitat, relocate the highway north/outside the migratory path, or expand the national park/create additional protected habitat. If migration disturbance or vehicle strikes was described: relocate the highway north/outside the migratory path, or construct a habitat corridor over/under the highway. If noise pollution/stress was described: install a sound barrier to mitigate noise pollution, or relocate the highway north/outside the migratory path. 1 point for a solution that logically addresses the specific problem given in part E.

Solution 2

(g)

Mark scheme

- A characteristic of an invasive species (such as spotted knapweed) that allows it to outcompete native species: it has many offspring/reproduces quickly/matures early/invests minimal energy per offspring (tends to be r-selected); it can feed on/use many different types of resources; or it can survive in conditions outside its normal habitat/has a wide tolerance range (tends to be a generalist). 1 point for any one valid characteristic.

Solution 2

(h)

Mark scheme

- An additional advantage of crop rotation (besides pest control): improved soil fertility/soil structure/soil quality; increased nutrient cycling/reduced need for fertilizer; reduced soil erosion; increased food security/crop yield; or increased biological activity in the soil. 1 point for any one valid additional advantage.

Solution 2

(i)

Mark scheme

- An environmental problem from controlling pests with large amounts of pesticide: pesticides can harm/kill nontarget species, or pests can develop resistance to the pesticide (leading to a pesticide treadmill). 1 point for either problem.

Solution 2

(j)

Mark scheme

- A solution to controlling pests other than pesticides or crop rotation: use biocontrol/intercropping/natural predators; trap insects/use mechanical controls to eliminate pests; or use genetically modified crops that are pest resistant. 1 point for any one valid alternative solution.

Question 3

2014 ■ Q3

[Map of the Pacific Ocean basin showing the continents of Asia, North America, South America, and Australia surrounding the Pacific Ocean; a curved line of dots traces the “Ring of Fire” around the Pacific margin — from Asia’s eastern coast, along the Aleutian chain, down the western coast of North America, through Central America, down the western coast of South America, across through Indonesia/the Philippines/Papua New Guinea, and down to New Zealand — each dot representing a volcano or an earthquake.]

Plate-tectonic theory states that the Earth’s lithosphere is broken into very slowly moving pieces or plates. Plate movements over vast stretches of time have led to the current orientation of our continents and oceans. Individual events along plate boundaries, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, pose periodic threats to human activity and ecosystems. The “Ring of Fire” is a term that describes the

Question 3

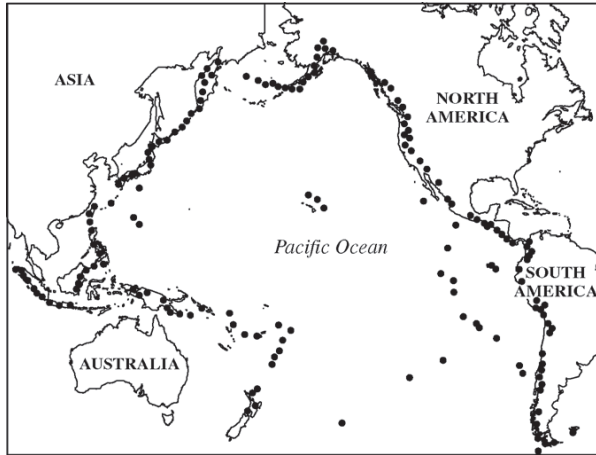
location of increased seismic and volcanic activity around the margins of the Pacific Ocean basin. On the map above, each dot represents a volcano or an earthquake.

(a)(i) Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines are examples of volcanic island chains that have formed along subduction zones between plates in the western Pacific.

Describe what happens when two tectonic plates collide along a subduction zone.

(a)(ii) Explain how subduction leads to volcanic activity.

Question 3



Question 3

2014 ■ Q3

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Question 3

activity around the margins of the Pacific Ocean basin. On the map above, each dot represents a volcano or an earthquake.

(b)(i) Although the landscape following a volcanic eruption may appear unable to support ecological communities, over time the area can be transformed through succession.

What is primary succession?

(b)(ii) Explain how primary succession can lead to soil formation on a newly formed volcanic landscape.

Question 3

2014 ■ Q3

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(c)(i) In addition to volcanic activity, highly destructive tsunamis are generated along Pacific Plate subduction zones.

Explain how a tsunami is generated along a subduction zone.

(c)(ii) Describe one negative ecological impact that tsunamis have on coastal environments.

Question 3

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(d)(i) Southern California experiences periodic devastating earthquakes along the San Andreas Fault, which is a transform boundary located along the eastern edge of the Pacific Plate.

Describe what happens to the tectonic plates along a transform boundary at the moment when an earthquake occurs.

(d)(ii) Describe what happens to the tectonic plates along a transform boundary during the time between earthquakes.