

SECOND EDITION

# Earth's Evolving Systems

The History of Planet Earth

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**Newark, Delaware**



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# DEDICATION

*This book is again dedicated to the late Dr. Allan Thompson (Department of Geological Sciences, University of Delaware), who did not shrink from learning something new and then teaching it. And to all those instructors who, like Al did, teach about the importance of the science of geology by transporting students to the other-worlds of Earth recorded in the rocks of geologic time.*

# BRIEF CONTENTS

<b>PART I</b>	<b>Earth Systems: Their Nature and Their Study</b>	<b>1</b>
CHAPTER 1	Introduction: Investigating Earth's Systems	3
CHAPTER 2	Plate Tectonics	23
CHAPTER 3	Earth Systems: Processes and Interactions	56
CHAPTER 4	Sedimentary Rocks, Sedimentary Environments, and Fossils	85
CHAPTER 5	Evolution and Extinction	113
CHAPTER 6	Geologic Time and Stratigraphy	142
<b>PART II</b>	<b>The Precambrian: Origin and Early Evolution of Earth's Systems</b>	<b>167</b>
CHAPTER 7	An Extraordinary Beginning: Hadean and Archean	169
CHAPTER 8	Origins of Life	200
CHAPTER 9	The Proterozoic: Life Becomes a Geologic Force	225
CHAPTER 10	Life's "Big Bang": The Origins and Early Diversification of Multicellular Animals	249
<b>PART III</b>	<b>The Phanerozoic: Toward the Modern World</b>	<b>275</b>
CHAPTER 11	The Early-to-Middle Paleozoic World	277
CHAPTER 12	Late Paleozoic World	328
CHAPTER 13	Mesozoic Era	364
CHAPTER 14	The Cenozoic Era: The Paleogene Period	421
CHAPTER 15	The Cenozoic Era: The Neogene Period	456
<b>PART IV</b>	<b>Humans and the Environment</b>	<b>499</b>
CHAPTER 16	Rapid Climate Change During the Holocene	501
CHAPTER 17	The Anthropocene: Humans as an Environmental Force	524

# CONTENTS

Preface to the Second Edition: For the Instructor and Student .....	xiii
The Student Experience.....	xv
Teaching Tools.....	xix
Acknowledgments .....	xxi
About the Author.....	xxii

## **PART I Earth Systems: Their Nature and Their Study .....1**

### **CHAPTER 1 Introduction: Investigating Earth's Systems.....3**

1.1 Why Study the History of Earth?.....	4
1.2 What Are the Major Earth Systems, and What Are Their Characteristics? ....	7
1.3 Geologic Time and Process .....	10
1.4 Directionality and the Evolution of Earth Systems.....	15
1.5 Geology as an Historical Science .....	16
1.6 Method and Study of Earth's Evolving Systems .....	17

### **CHAPTER 2 Plate Tectonics.....23**

2.1 Introduction .....	24
2.2 Structure of Earth .....	24
2.3 Plate Tectonics: From Hypothesis to Theory .....	28
2.3.1 Early studies of mountain building .....	28
2.3.2 Hypothesis of continental drift.....	28
2.3.3 Hypothesis of seafloor spreading .....	31
2.3.4 Corroboration of seafloor spreading.....	35
2.4 Continental Margins and Plate Boundaries: Features and Behavior.....	37
2.4.1 Types of margins .....	37
2.4.2 Tectonic features of Earth's surface .....	37
2.4.3 Types of plate boundaries.....	40
2.5 Orogenesis .....	45
2.5.1 Types of orogenesis .....	45
2.5.2 Rocks and sediments associated with orogenesis.....	46
2.6 Isostasy .....	48
2.7 Tectonic Cycle.....	48
2.8 Tectonic Cycle and Scientific Method .....	51

<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>Earth Systems: Processes and Interactions . . . . .</b>	<b>56</b>
3.1	The Solid Earth System: Components and Processes . . . . .	57
3.2	Rock Cycle . . . . .	57
3.2.1	Igneous rocks . . . . .	57
3.2.2	Sedimentary rocks . . . . .	63
3.2.3	Metamorphic rocks . . . . .	63
3.3	Atmosphere and Its Circulation . . . . .	66
3.4	The Hydrosphere . . . . .	69
3.4.1	Hydrologic cycle . . . . .	69
3.4.2	Ocean circulation . . . . .	73
3.5	The Biosphere. . . . .	76
3.5.1	Biogeography: distribution of plants and animals over Earth's surface. . . . .	76
3.5.2	Energy relationships. . . . .	76
3.5.3	Biogeochemical cycles. . . . .	77
3.6	The Tectonic Cycle and Earth Systems . . . . .	78
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>Sedimentary Rocks, Sedimentary Environments, and Fossils . . . . .</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1	Introduction to Sedimentary Rocks. . . . .	86
4.2	Processes of Weathering . . . . .	86
4.3	Terrigenous Sedimentary Rocks. . . . .	88
4.3.1	Formation of terrigenous sediments . . . . .	88
4.3.2	What do terrigenous sedimentary rocks tell us about how they formed? . . . . .	88
4.4	Biogenic Sedimentary Rocks. . . . .	90
4.5	Chemical Sedimentary Rocks . . . . .	93
4.6	Marine Environments . . . . .	94
4.6.1	Marginal marine environments . . . . .	94
4.6.2	Coral reefs. . . . .	97
4.6.3	Continental shelves, continental slopes, and the abyss. . . . .	99
4.7	Sedimentary Structures . . . . .	105
4.8	Fossils. . . . .	105
4.8.1	Early processes of fossilization. . . . .	105
4.8.2	Modes of preservation . . . . .	108
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>Evolution and Extinction . . . . .</b>	<b>113</b>
5.1	Introduction . . . . .	114
5.2	Early Theories of Evolution . . . . .	114
5.3	Charles Darwin and the Beginnings of the Modern Theory of Evolution. . . . .	117
5.4	Basic Premises of Darwinian Evolution . . . . .	119
5.5	Inheritance and Variation . . . . .	121
5.6	Genetic Code and Mutation. . . . .	122
5.7	Evidence for Natural Selection . . . . .	123

5.8	Speciation .....	125
5.9	Evolution and the Fossil Record .....	126
5.9.1	Comparative anatomy .....	126
5.9.2	Cladistics .....	126
5.9.3	Microevolution .....	127
5.9.4	Macroevolution .....	130
5.10	Mass Extinction .....	134
5.11	Biodiversity Through the Phanerozoic .....	137

## **CHAPTER 6**      **Geologic Time and Stratigraphy .....**      **142**

6.1	Introduction .....	143
6.2	Relative Ages .....	143
6.3	Absolute Ages .....	143
6.4	Evolution of the Geologic Time Scale .....	146
6.5	Correlation .....	150
6.5.1	Lithocorrelation .....	150
6.5.2	Formations and facies .....	151
6.5.3	Biostratigraphy .....	156
6.5.4	Integrating different stratigraphic datums .....	158
6.6	How Complete Is the Geologic Record? .....	158
6.6.1	Unconformities and diastems .....	158
6.6.2	Sequence stratigraphy .....	159
6.7	Why Is Sea Level So Important? .....	162

## **PART II**      **The Precambrian: Origin and Early Evolution of Earth's Systems .....167**

### **CHAPTER 7**      **An Extraordinary Beginning: Hadean and Archean .....**      **169**

7.1	Introduction .....	170
7.2	Origin of the Universe .....	170
7.2.1	Early observations and theories .....	170
7.2.2	The Big Bang: from hypothesis to theory .....	171
7.2.3	The inflationary universe .....	173
7.3	Origin of Matter and Forces of Nature .....	174
7.4	Formation of the Solar System .....	176
7.5	The Hadean: Origin of Earth and Moon .....	179
7.5.1	Earth's earliest evolution .....	179
7.5.2	Origin of the Moon .....	182
7.6	The Archean: Beginnings of a Permanent Crust .....	185
7.6.1	Shields and cratons: cores of continents .....	185
7.6.2	Gneiss terranes .....	185
7.6.3	Greenstone belts .....	186
7.6.4	Microplate tectonics and differentiation of the early crust .....	188

7.7	Climatic Evolution of the Inner Planets .....	190
7.7.1	Habitable zone.....	190
7.7.2	Faint young sun .....	192
7.7.3	Weathering and tectonism on the inner planets .....	193

## CHAPTER 8      **Origins of Life .....**      **200**

8.1	Life as a Geologic Force .....	201
8.2	Early Theories of the Origin of Life: Spontaneous Generation and Panspermia.....	201
8.3	What Is Life? .....	202
8.3.1	Basic traits of life .....	202
8.3.2	Composition of life .....	203
8.4	Chemical Evolution .....	203
8.4.1	Early theories .....	203
8.4.2	Hydrothermal vents and the pyrite world .....	208
8.4.3	The RNA world .....	209
8.4.4	Autocatalysis .....	211
8.5	Origin of Eukaryotic Cells.....	213
8.6	Precambrian Fossil Record and Molecular Clocks .....	215
8.7	Is There Life on Other Planets? .....	218

## CHAPTER 9      **The Proterozoic: Life Becomes a Geologic Force .....**      **225**

9.1	Significance of the Proterozoic.....	226
9.2	Appearance of Modern Plate Tectonics.....	226
9.3	Sedimentary Rocks and Continental Shelves .....	230
9.4	Oxygenation of Earth's Atmosphere .....	232
9.4.1	Appearance of oxygen .....	232
9.4.2	Stages in the oxygenation of Earth's atmosphere .....	235
9.4.3	Rise of ozone .....	237
9.5	Snowball Earth: Earth Out of Balance?.....	237
9.5.1	Previous hypotheses for Snowball Earths .....	237
9.5.2	Snowball Earth reexamined .....	240
9.5.3	How could a Snowball Earth have occurred in the first place? ...	242
9.5.4	Why were there no Snowball Venuses? .....	243
9.5.5	Why didn't Snowball Earths recur after the Precambrian? .....	245

## CHAPTER 10      **Life's "Big Bang": The Origins and Early Diversification of Multicellular Animals .....**      **249**

10.1	Enigma of Multicellular Organisms .....	250
10.2	Stages of Life's Big Bang.....	250
10.2.1	Ediacara fauna.....	251
10.2.2	Trace fossils and early hard parts .....	253
10.2.3	Burgess Shale and the "Cambrian explosion" .....	259
10.3	What Do These Faunas Tell Us? .....	263

10.4	Why Did Metazoans Appear? .....	266
10.4.1	Snowball Earths .....	266
10.4.2	Oxygen .....	267
10.4.3	Predation .....	267
10.4.4	Food .....	268
10.4.5	Changes in biogeochemical cycles .....	269
10.4.6	Ecologic and genetic mechanisms .....	269
10.4.7	Extinction .....	270
10.5	Molecular Clocks and the Fossil Record of Early Metazoans .....	271

## **PART III The Phanerozoic: Toward the Modern World . . . . .275**

### **CHAPTER 11 The Early-to-Middle Paleozoic World . . . . . 277**

11.1	Introduction: Beginnings of the Phanerozoic Eon .....	278
11.2	Tectonic Cycle: Impacts on the Hydrosphere, Atmosphere, and Rock Cycle .....	278
11.2.1	Sea level, CO <sub>2</sub> , and sedimentary facies. ....	278
11.2.2	Ocean circulation and chemistry. ....	286
11.3	Tectonic Cycle and Orogeny .....	287
11.3.1	Physiographic provinces of the Appalachian Mountains .....	287
11.3.2	Orogenic episodes .....	290
11.4	Impact of Orogeny on Earth Systems .....	296
11.5	Diversification of the Marine Biosphere .....	299
11.5.1	Plankton and microfossils. ....	299
11.5.2	Benthic ecosystems .....	300
11.5.3	Reefs .....	305
11.6	Marine Realm Invades the Terrestrial Biosphere .....	308
11.6.1	Invertebrates .....	308
11.6.2	Fish .....	308
11.6.3	Amphibians and the invasion of land .....	317
11.6.4	Land plants and the “greening” of the continents. ....	318
11.7	Extinction .....	322

### **CHAPTER 12 Late Paleozoic World. . . . . 328**

12.1	Introduction to the Late Paleozoic Era .....	329
12.2	Tectonic Cycle: Impacts on the Hydrosphere, Atmosphere, and Rock Cycle .....	330
12.2.1	Sea level, CO <sub>2</sub> , and sedimentary facies. ....	330
12.2.2	Ocean circulation and chemistry. ....	330
12.3	Tectonic Cycle and Orogeny .....	332
12.3.1	Alleghenian and related orogenies .....	332
12.3.2	Ancestral Rockies .....	333
12.3.3	Sonoma orogeny .....	334
12.4	Impact of Orogeny on Earth Systems .....	336

12.5	Diversification of the Marine Biosphere .....	338
12.5.1	Plankton and other microfossils .....	338
12.5.2	Benthic ecosystems .....	340
12.6	Diversification of the Terrestrial Biosphere .....	343
12.6.1	Terrestrial floras .....	343
12.6.2	Terrestrial floras and oxygen .....	346
12.6.3	Invertebrate life on land .....	348
12.6.4	Vertebrates .....	348
12.7	Multiple Causes of Extinction? .....	354

## **CHAPTER 13**    **Mesozoic Era..... 364**

13.1	Introduction to the Mesozoic Era.....	365
13.2	Tectonic Cycle: Impacts on the Hydrosphere, Atmosphere, and Rock Cycle.....	365
13.2.1	Rifting of Pangaea.....	365
13.2.2	Sea level, CO <sub>2</sub> , and sedimentary facies.....	366
13.2.3	Ocean circulation and chemistry.....	368
13.3	Tectonic Cycle and Orogeny .....	371
13.3.1	Eastern North America.....	371
13.3.2	Cordilleran Orogenic Belt .....	372
13.3.3	Orogenic episodes .....	372
13.4	Orogeny, Sea Level, and Sedimentation .....	377
13.5	Diversification of the Marine Biosphere .....	381
13.5.1	Plankton and microfossils.....	381
13.5.2	Benthic ecosystems .....	382
13.5.3	Marine vertebrates .....	387
13.6	Diversification of the Terrestrial Biosphere .....	390
13.6.1	Plants and insects.....	390
13.6.2	Vertebrates .....	393
13.6.3	Evolution of flight .....	406
13.6.4	Mammals .....	409
13.7	Extinction .....	411
13.7.1	Late Triassic extinctions .....	411
13.7.2	Late Cretaceous extinctions .....	411

## **CHAPTER 14**    **The Cenozoic Era: The Paleogene Period..... 421**

14.1	Introduction to the Cenozoic Era.....	422
14.2	Tectonic Cycle and Orogeny .....	423
14.2.1	Europe and Asia.....	423
14.2.2	The Pacific Rim .....	423
14.2.3	Gulf and Atlantic coastal plains .....	429
14.3	Tectonic Cycle: Impacts on Climate, Ocean Circulation, and Chemistry .....	429
14.3.1	Climate and ocean circulation .....	429
14.3.2	Ocean chemistry .....	434

14.4	Diversification of the Marine Biosphere .....	435
14.4.1	Microfossils and other invertebrates .....	435
14.4.2	Vertebrates .....	435
14.5	Diversification of the Terrestrial Biosphere .....	437
14.5.1	Plants.....	437
14.5.2	Early evolution and diversification of mammals.....	438
14.5.3	Archaic mammals .....	440
14.5.4	Climate change and mammals .....	441
14.5.5	Diversification of modern mammals .....	445
14.5.6	Birds.....	446
14.6	Extinction: Glaciers, Volcanoes, and Impacts .....	448

## **CHAPTER 15    The Cenozoic Era: The Neogene Period ..... 456**

15.1	Introduction to the Neogene.....	457
15.2	Tectonics and Sedimentation.....	458
15.2.1	Europe, Asia, and Africa.....	458
15.2.2	Central and South America.....	458
15.2.3	Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of North America .....	458
15.2.4	Western North America .....	458
15.2.5	West Coast of North America .....	462
15.2.6	Evolution of the San Andreas Fault system.....	465
15.3	How Was the West Widened? Evolution of the Basin and Range .....	466
15.3.1	Background .....	467
15.3.2	Hypotheses for the formation of the Basin and Range.....	467
15.4	Climate, Ocean Circulation, and Chemistry.....	470
15.5	The “Ice Ages”: Evolution of a Theory.....	472
15.5.1	Background .....	472
15.5.2	The eccentricity of James Croll .....	472
15.5.3	Precession of the equinoxes.....	472
15.5.4	Milutin Milankovitch and obliquity .....	475
15.5.5	Planktonic foraminifera and the oxygen isotope curve .....	477
15.6	Neogene Life.....	479
15.6.1	Marine life.....	479
15.6.2	Land plants.....	480
15.6.3	Terrestrial vertebrates .....	481
15.6.4	Evolution of humans .....	481
15.7	Extinction .....	492

## **PART IV    Humans and the Environment .....499**

### **CHAPTER 16    Rapid Climate Change During the Holocene..... 501**

16.1	Introduction to the Holocene.....	502
16.2	Beginning of the Holocene .....	502
16.2.1	Sea-level rise .....	502
16.2.2	Younger Dryas .....	503

16.3	Rapid Climate Change on Millennial Time Scales .....	507
16.3.1	Rapid climate change involving the oceans .....	511
16.3.2	Rapid climate change on land .....	512
16.4	Rapid Climate Change on Centennial Time Scales .....	513
16.5	Rapid Climate Change on Interdecadal to Multidecadal Time Scales...	514
16.6	Climatic Modes and Climatic Irreversibility .....	518

## CHAPTER 17 The Anthropocene: Humans as an Environmental Force ..... 524

17.1	Introduction: From Geohistory to Geopolitics .....	525
17.1.1	Climate, history, and the modern world .....	525
17.2	Examples of Human–Climate Interactions During the Last Millennium .....	526
17.3	Brief History of the Growing Dependence on Fossil Fuels .....	527
17.4	Alternative Energy Sources and Technologies .....	529
17.4.1	Wind, geothermal, and solar energy .....	530
17.4.2	Hydroelectric power .....	530
17.4.3	Nuclear energy .....	535
17.4.4	Methane gas hydrates .....	537
17.4.5	Biofuels .....	537
17.4.6	Automobiles .....	537
17.5	Consequences of Fossil Fuel Combustion .....	538
17.5.1	Carbon dioxide: Temperature rise and ocean acidification .....	538
17.5.2	Sea-level rise .....	542
17.5.3	Storms .....	542
17.5.4	Fisheries .....	543
17.5.5	Precipitation patterns .....	543
17.5.6	Disease .....	546
17.6	Biodiversity and Extinction .....	548
17.7	Closer to Home .....	552
17.8	Why Should We Care, and What Can We Do? .....	557

Glossary .....	563
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Index .....	593
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# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION: FOR THE INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENT

As the title indicates, *Earth's Evolving Systems* attempts to bridge the gap between traditional historical geology texts and the study of Earth's systems. The response to the first edition of *Earth's Evolving Systems* has been quite gratifying, especially given the recent emphasis by a National Science Foundation–sponsored webinar by the American Geophysical Union and American Geological Institute in October 2015 entitled “Geoscience Workforce and the Future of Undergraduate Geoscience Education.” The respondents to this webinar emphasized at the outset the complex, dynamic linkages among Earth's systems, the role of “deep time” (and thus the role of the scale of time in understanding process), the origin and evolution of life, climate change, and energy resources. All of these topics were emphasized in the first edition of *Earth's Evolving Systems* and continue to be emphasized in the second.

Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement, and I have attempted to respond positively to reviewers' comments on the first edition. This has of course involved some compromises, given each instructor's approach to his or her particular course and research and teaching interests. Chapters have been updated with information on significant advances that have been reported in the literature over the past several years. Themes stated at the beginning of each chapter are now restated or rephrased, in some cases as “big concept” questions, which are highlighted at relevant points in the text margins of the chapters. As before, each chapter is followed by a summary that provides a detailed overview of the chapter.

The following key points about the second edition are applicable to all chapters:

- As in the first edition, a major theme of the text is the method of multiple working hypotheses and debates, among them the origin of the theory of plate tectonics, the origins of the atmosphere and life, the tectonics of the western United States, human evolution, and the recognition of Milankovitch cycles.
- Discussion and contributions and photos of some major women scientists to the earth sciences, such as Marie Tharp and Lynn Margulis, have been included in the relevant chapters.
- An extensive list of references is provided at the end of each chapter, along with a list of key terms and review questions. In addition, a second set of questions, called “Food for Thought,” is provided to stimulate students to think beyond the chapter material.

## Part I: Earth Systems: Their Nature and Their Study

Major changes were made to Chapters 1–6 to improve the flow of the material in Part I:

- **Chapter 1:** A brief discussion of Vladimir Vernadsky, the founder of Earth systems science, has been added. The discussion on the nature of historical sciences such as geology has been improved by eliminating Chapter 18 from the first edition and incorporating certain elements of that chapter into Chapter 1.
- **Chapter 2:** As before, much of the discussion of Earth's history revolves around the framework of the tectonic cycle. Plate tectonics has therefore been moved from Chapter 6 to Chapter 2.
- **Chapter 3:** The discussion of the interactions among Earth's systems has been simplified, and the introduction and discussion of specific stable isotopes have been pushed back to the chapters where they are explicitly tied to the geologic record. A new section has been added to this chapter, “How Does the Tectonic Cycle Affect Other Earth Systems?” which describes the effects of the tectonic cycle on sea level, ocean circulation, the hydrologic cycle, and major lithologies.
- **Chapters 5 and 6:** Chapter 5, which presents evolution, remains largely unchanged, but it now precedes Chapter 6, which deals with geologic time and stratigraphy. Discussion of iterative evolution has been moved from Chapter 14 to the section on marine organisms during the Paleogene.

## Part II: The Precambrian: Origin and Early Evolution of Earth's Systems

- **Chapter 7:** Chapter content has been updated to reflect the most recent research.
- **Chapter 8:** A few reviewers questioned the relevance of a chapter on the origins of life in an Earth science text. However, I believe that life's origins are among the most fascinating chapters in Earth's history and that this is when the initial, fundamental interactions among all of Earth's systems began to occur. Life has been a geologic force throughout much of Earth's history, as emphasized throughout the text. The study of the interactions between life and Earth therefore serves as a bridge

between the biologic and inorganic worlds. Furthermore, like evolutionary theory, origin of life studies present viable alternatives to Creationism. A new paragraph at the beginning of the chapter now reiterates the rationale for retaining Chapter 8.

- **Chapter 9:** Chapter content has been updated to reflect the most recent research.
- **Chapter 10:** The discussion of the origins of various important fossil phyla has been augmented.

### Part III: The Phanerozoic: Toward the Modern World

- **Chapters 11–15:** Chapters on the Phanerozoic continue to use the tectonic cycle as a basic framework for understanding the history of the Earth. Many figures in these chapters have been replaced and sections on various taxa augmented with multiple photos and new artwork.
- **Chapter 15:** The section on human evolution in Chapter 15 has been completely revised and reviewed by two professional paleoanthropologists.

### Part IV: Humans and the Environment

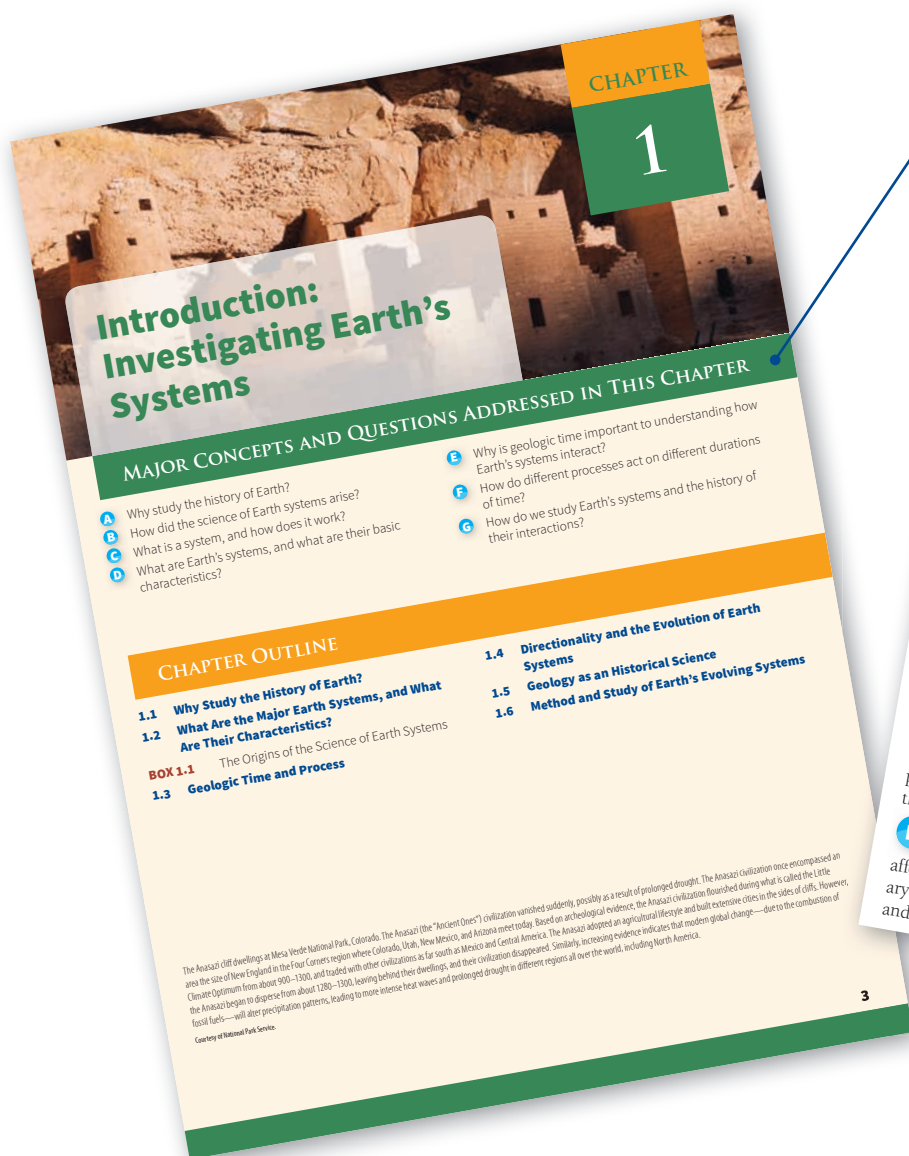
- **Chapter 16:** As before, Chapter 16, which is on rapid climate change, sets the stage for the Gordian knot of natural versus anthropogenic climate change and its sociopolitical implications for future climate and energy resources, which are discussed in Chapter 17.
- **Chapter 17:** As explained in Chapter 1, the initial study of Earth systems was a response to anthropogenic effects. Humans are now a major, if not the most important, geologic force on the planet. The emphasis on the environment and “sustainability” at many academic institutions, including my own, does not diminish the importance of historical sciences, such as geology, in addressing these problems. In fact, the inclusion of chapters on anthropogenic impacts and their potential resolution is a prime opportunity to make historical geology not just an exercise in the “past” but to make it “contemporary” and “relevant” and to potentially awaken students’ latent interest in the history of Earth and its lifeforms. Consequently, I have occasionally tied certain portions of Chapters 16 and 17 to examples from the geologic record.

Ron Martin  
Newark, Delaware  
August 10, 2016

# THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The second edition of *Earth's Evolving Systems: The History of Planet Earth* was designed with numerous features to create an engaging learning environment for students and to enhance their experience with the text:

- **Major Concepts and Questions Addressed in This Chapter**—Every chapter opens with a list of questions that will be addressed throughout the chapter. Students should review this list prior to digging into the chapter to help guide their focus. The new text design also incorporates icons identifying where in the chapter each concept is addressed to help guide study and review.



■ **Featured Boxes**—Many chapters contain boxes providing greater depth on special topics.

■ **Concept and Reasoning Checks**—As students progress through the chapter they will encounter these questions, which will encourage them to pause and assess their grasp of the material.

### CONCEPT AND REASONING CHECKS

1. Diagram the hydrologic cycle.
2. How are the hydrologic cycle and atmospheric circulation related?
3. What drives surface ocean circulation?
4. What causes the deep oceans to circulate?
5. How do the oceans influence Earth's albedo?

### CONCEPT AND REASONING CHECKS

1. What is the evidence for the solar nebula hypothesis as opposed to the original Kant-Laplace hypothesis?
2. How do the inner planets, including Earth, differ from the outer planets?
3. Why might carbonaceous chondrites have been an important source of water for early Earth?

### CONCEPT AND REASONING CHECKS

1. Volcanism has been implicated in several mass extinctions. Which ones?
2. Diagram the test of a meteor impact as the causal agent of the Late Cretaceous mass extinction in terms of the scientific method diagrammed in Chapter 1 (see Box 13.3).

### BOX 13.3 Late Cretaceous Extinctions and the Scientific Method

Most mass extinctions appear to be somehow related to the tectonic cycle. However, the Late Cretaceous extinctions involved—and may well have resulted primarily from—an impact, as indicated by the occurrence of shocked mineral assemblages (Box Figure 13.3A). Whereas the impact hypothesis certainly arouses our imaginations, how the hypothesis came to be widely accepted by the scientific community is also a prime example of how scientific investigation works (see Chapter 1). Moreover, the corroboration of the hypothesis paved the way for the acceptance of extraterrestrial impacts as important—even extraordinary—agents of geologic, climatic, and biospheric change. It also unquestioned acceptance of Lyell's dogma of slow, gradual change to a broader doctrine that recognized that Earth systems processes vary through time and in



BOX FIGURE 13.3A An artist's visualization of the impact of an asteroid with Earth.

Initially, a dark sedimentary layer containing a high concentration of the element iridium was found near Gubbio, Italy, almost by accident (see Chapter 1). The iridium layer also occurred at the time of the mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous Period and many other organisms became extinct. Iridium is not normally found in rocks of Earth's crust and could have come from only two sources: volcanoes fed by the mantle, which is enriched in iridium, or from an extraterrestrial body. The hypothesis was that the iridium layer was generated by a meteor enriched in iridium. The impact presumably threw a gigantic dust cloud into Earth's stratosphere that suddenly cooled the planet, causing extinction; the blockage of sunlight also shut down marine photosynthesis causing a **Strangelove Ocean** (named after the character of the same name in a famous movie) in which there was a sudden, strong shift in carbon isotope ratios to much lower values (see Chapter 9; Box Figure 13.3B).

A prediction made from the hypothesis was that if an impact were responsible for the Late Cretaceous extinctions, an iridium layer should be found all over the world in rocks of exactly the same age. Scientists tested the hypothesis by exploring for the iridium layer all over the world, on land and in deep-sea cores, where the rocks were of the right age. The hypothesis was corroborated: the Late Cretaceous iridium layer is now known not only from Gubbio, Italy, but also from Stevns Klint (Steven's Cliff) near Copenhagen, Denmark; El Kef, Tunisia, in north Africa; and El Mirador, Mexico (to name only a few of the more famous and intensively studied localities), as well as in many deep-sea cores (see Box Figure 13.3B).

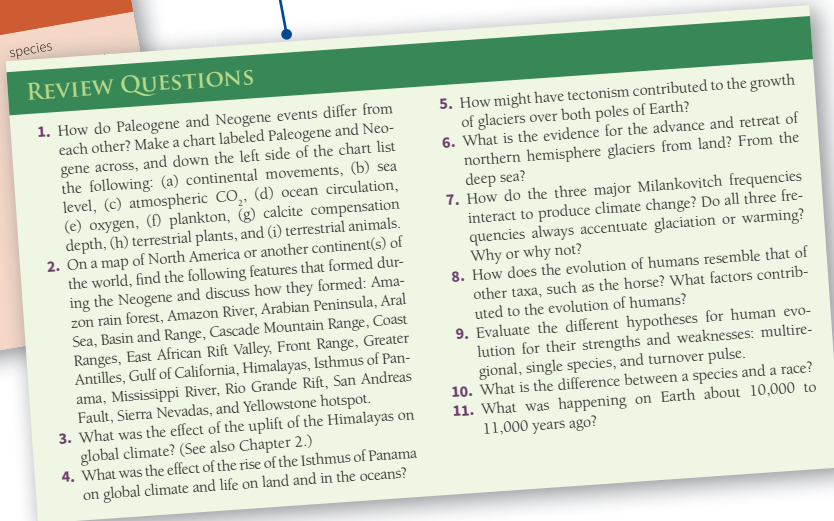
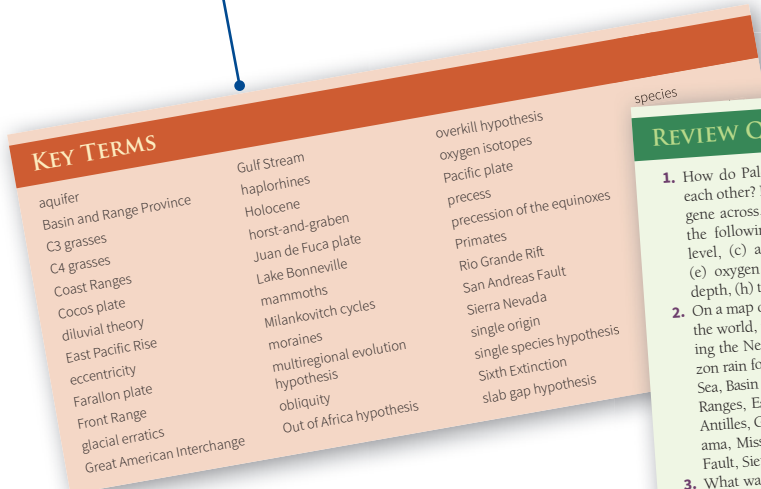
■ **Summaries**—Each chapter concludes with a bulleted list of the key concepts addressed in the chapter.

### SUMMARY

- The theory of plate tectonics really began with early ideas about orogenesis, or mountain building. Hypotheses and theories of mountain building changed radically over the past two centuries, and their development is a prime example of how scientists work and think.
- The discovery of radioactivity led to more modern theories of mountain building. Of these, it is Alfred Wegener's hypothesis of continental drift—based on a variety of evidence—that paved the way for the modern theory of plate tectonics. Initially, Wegener's hypothesis was roundly criticized because he could not identify a mechanism (or at least many geologists' minds) remained "fixed" until the work of Harry Hess in the 1950s, which proposed the process of seafloor spreading as a mechanism to move continents.
- In the 1960s, the detection of magnetic seafloor spreading corroborated seafloor spreading and provided stripes corroborated continental drift that had eluded Wegener. Seafloor spreading also corroborated Hess's views about the formation of guyots, heat flow beneath mid-ocean ridges, and the destruction of seafloor in trenches. Rearranging the continents into different positions also began to make sense of apparent polar wandering curves.
- Consequently, what had been known as continental drift was wedded to seafloor spreading to produce the theory of plate tectonics.
- Today, plate tectonics is recognized as an integral component of Earth's systems. We know that Earth's lithosphere (the crust and uppermost mantle) consists of about 15 large and small plates that are moved by the production of new seafloor at mid-ocean ridges. Forming portions of the plates are continents. The plates move over the asthenosphere and a solid inner mantle. Beneath the mantle are an outer fluid and a solid inner iron and nickel-rich core that generate Earth's magnetic field.
- Although convection cells are widely viewed as moving the plates, several hypotheses have been proposed to explain how the seafloor actually moves: (1) slab pull, in which a descending slab pulls the rest of slab behind it downward; (2) ridge-push, in which newly formed ocean crust as spreading centers pushes the slab ahead of it; (3) gravity slide, in which a slab slowly "slides" down the side of a spreading center, pushing the slab ahead of it; and (4) suction from the descending portion of a plate.
- Based on plate tectonics, different features of the planet can be arranged into a sequence of stages called the tectonic cycle: East African Rift Valley, Red Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, and suture (Himalayas). Not all rift valleys become seaways, however; many have become failed rift valleys or aulacogens, down which some of the world's major rivers such as the Amazon flow. The tectonic cycle has occurred a number of times during Earth's history, each cycle spanning several hundred million years.
- Based on the tectonic cycle, continental margins and plate boundaries can change through time. There are two basic types of continental margins: active and passive. Passive continental margins, like those along the Atlantic Ocean, accumulate sediment along their margins. Active margins, like those along the Pacific Ocean's ring of fire, are sites of subduction, volcanism, and earthquakes.
- Plate boundaries are classified into three basic categories: convergent (associated with sea floor trenches), divergent (associated with rifts), and transform, which are associated with offsets of mid-ocean ridges.
- Convergent boundaries are themselves of three types: island arc (for example, Japan), continental island arc (for example, the Cascades), and collisional (Himalayas).
- The three types of convergent plate boundaries parallel the different types of orogenesis and the formation of major geologic structures such as faults and folds: island arcs only, plate collisions without continents, and continent-continent collisions.
- As orogenesis occurs, smaller pieces of crust with distinctive geologic features (rock type, fossils, paleomagnetic directions) called microcontinents or exotic terranes can be sandwiched between the larger continents.
- No one has ever observed the tectonic cycle because of the immense amounts of geologic time involved in its completion, but it can be pieced together based on observations of modern tectonic settings.

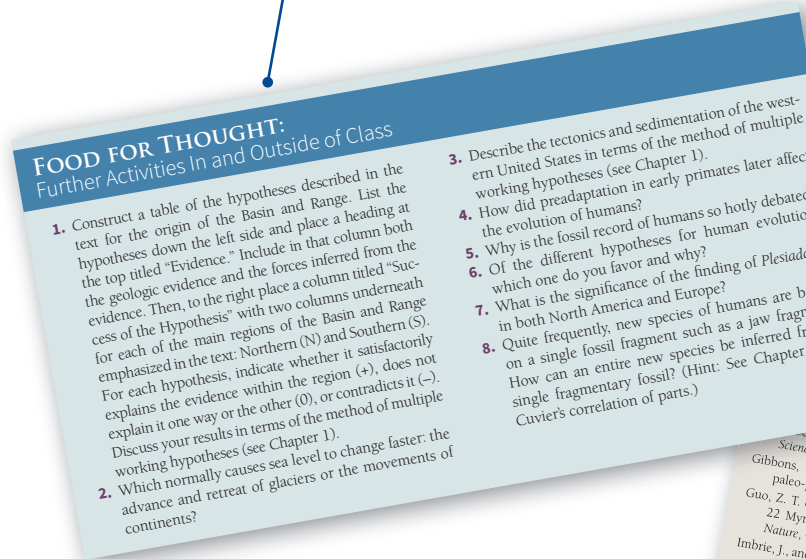
■ **Key Terms List**—A list of the key terms from each chapter is provided to help students review new vocabulary.

■ **Review Questions**—These end-of-chapter questions are great for homework assignments or self-guided study.



■ **Food for Thought**—More in-depth than the Review Questions, the Food for Thought activities are great for individual or group assignments in or out of the classroom. They will challenge students to think critically about the material presented in the chapter.

■ **Sources and Further Reading**—The list of references for the chapter is a great place for students to begin additional research into special topics.



■ **New and Revised Art and Photos**—The art in this second edition, including over 150 new images and 150 revised illustrations, has been significantly improved to support students as they absorb new information.

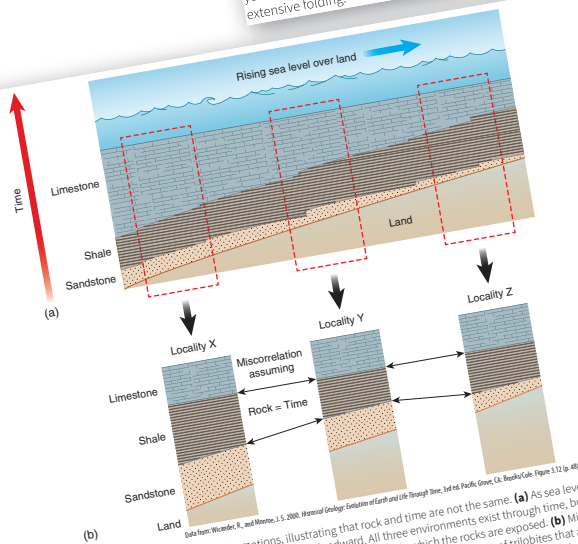
**TABLE 7.1**  
**Major features of the planets**

	Mercury	Venus	Earth	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn	Uranus	Neptune
Diameter (km)	4,878	12,104	12,756	6,794	142,800	120,540	51,200	49,500
Diameter in relation to Earth	38%	95%	X	53%	1,120%	941%	401%	388%
Mass in relation to Earth	5.5%	82%	X	10.7%	31,780%	9,430%	1,460%	1,720%
Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> )	5.43	5.24	5.52	3.9	1.3	0.7	1.2	1.6
Rotation period (days)	58.6	243	23.4	25.2	3.1	26.7	-0.72	0.67
Inclination of axis of rotation to equator (degrees)	0.0	177.4	X	38%	253%	107%	92%	29
Surface gravity in relation to Earth	38%	91%	X	38%	253%	107%	92%	118%

AU = astronomical unit, or the distance between the Earth and sun.



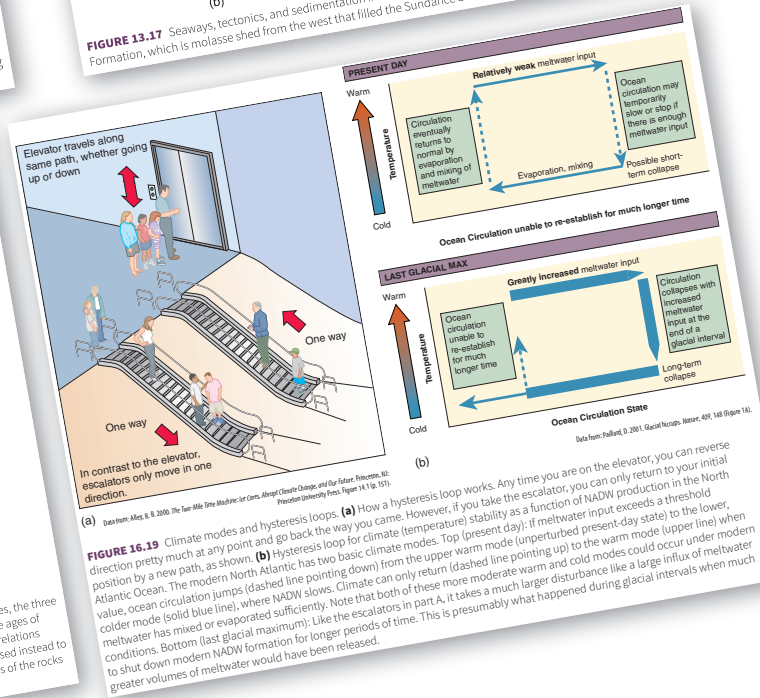
**FIGURE 6.20** (a) Cross section of highly-folded thrust sheets in the Alps. The huge blocks of rocks that have been thrust over younger rocks are called nappes. (b) Photo of the Alps showing extensive folding.



**FIGURE 6.9** The difference between facies and formations, illustrating that rock and time are not the same. (a) As sea level rises, the three formations represented by sandstone, shale, and limestone, move landward. All three environments exist through time, but the ages of each of the types of rocks, which are recognized as formations, differs over the area in which the rocks are exposed. (b) Misconceptions result if rock and time are considered equal (arrows). The red and orange dots represent the extinctions of trilobites that are used instead to produce more accurate time lines for correlation (see section "6.5.3 Biostratigraphy" for further discussion). Note how the ages of the rocks are not the same between the localities, even within the same formation.



**FIGURE 13.17** Seaways, tectonics, and sedimentation in the interior of western North America during the Jurassic. (a) The Morrison Formation, which is molasse shed from the west that filled the Sundance Sea. (b) Exposure of the Morrison Formation.

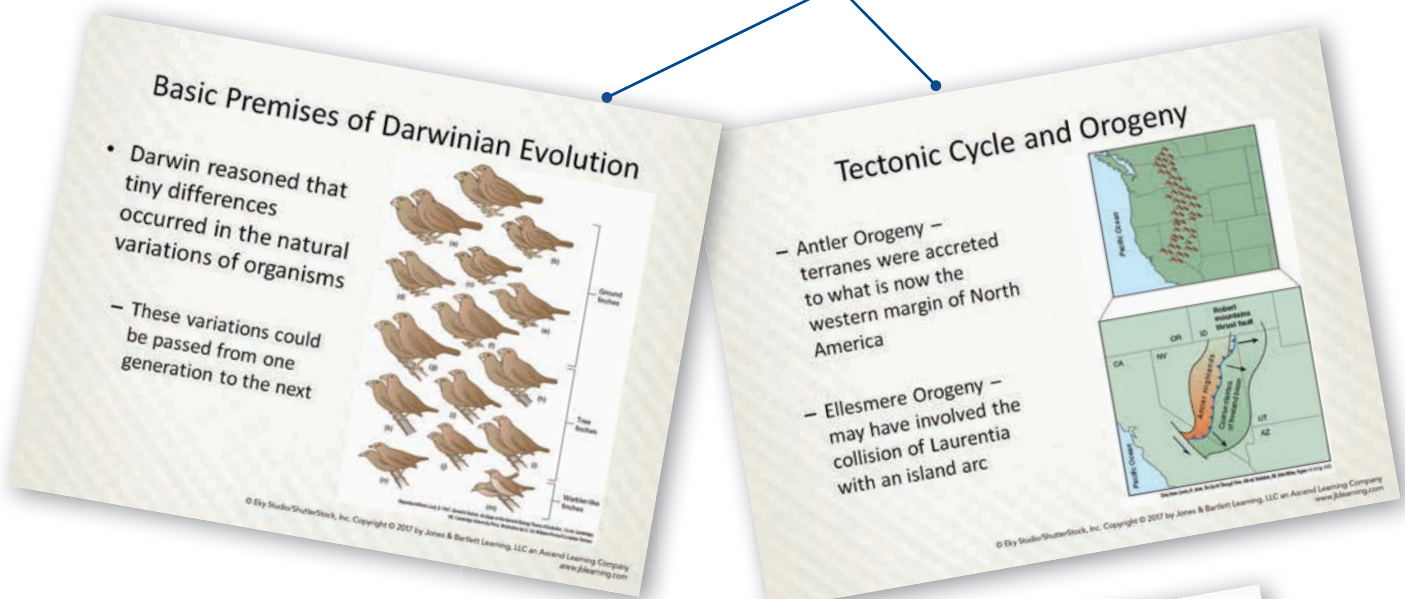


**FIGURE 16.19** Climate modes and hysteresis loops. (a) How a hysteresis loop works. Any time you are on the elevator, you can reverse direction pretty much at any point and go back the way you came. However, if you take the elevator, you can only return to your initial position by a new path, as shown. (b) Hysteresis loop for climate (temperature) stability as a function of meltwater input in the North Atlantic Ocean. The modern North Atlantic has two basic climate modes. Top (present day): if meltwater input exceeds a threshold value, ocean circulation jumps (dashed line pointing down) to the warm mode (upper line) when NADW production is high enough to re-establish for much longer time. Note that both of these more moderate warm and cold modes could occur under modern conditions. Bottom (last glacial maximum): Like the escalators in part A, it takes a much larger disturbance like a large influx of meltwater to shut down modern NADW formation for longer periods of time. This is presumably what happened during glacial intervals when much greater volumes of meltwater would have been released.

# TEACHING TOOLS

A variety of Teaching Tools are available for qualified instructors to assist with preparing for and teaching their courses. These resources are accessible via digital download and multiple other formats:

- **Lecture Outlines in PowerPoint format**—The *Lecture Outlines in PowerPoint format* provide lecture notes and images for each chapter of *Earth's Evolving Systems: The History of Planet Earth, Second Edition*. Instructors with Microsoft PowerPoint can customize the outlines, art, and order of presentation and add their own material.



- **Key Image Review**—The *Key Image Review* provides the illustrations, photographs, and tables to which Jones & Bartlett Learning holds the copyright or has permission to reprint digitally. These images are not for sale or distribution but may be used to enhance your existing slides, tests, and quizzes or other classroom material.



■ **Test Bank Material**—The author has provided 500+ multiple-choice questions, including true-false, matching, and identifications. Each chapter has approximately 30 to 40 questions. The author of this text has used some—but certainly not all—of these questions in his introductory course. Many questions ask for basic factual information, others are intended to make students “think about it.” In some cases, essentially the same questions are worded differently. Alternative wordings and answers are suggested for some questions. Some questions refer to specific figures in the text. Instructors are welcome to modify the questions as they see fit. Short and long essay questions can be developed from

the Review Questions and Food for Thought exercises at the end of each chapter and the Concept and Reasoning Checks embedded throughout. These could be used in smaller classes as writing assignments. Students could be assigned the questions ahead of time or given a list to choose from. These questions are available as an instructor download.

■ **Instructor’s Manual**—An Instructor’s Manual containing an instructor’s overview, instructional aids, answers to Review and Food for Thought questions, and suggestions for homework or in-class projects and assignments is available for each chapter.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Ron Martin** is Professor of Geological Sciences at the University of Delaware. He grew up in southwestern Ohio, where world famous assemblages of Late Ordovician fossils drew his attention to paleontology. He received a B.S. degree in Geology and Paleontology from Bowling Green State University (Ohio), M.S. in Geology from the University of Florida, and Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of California at Berkeley. He worked as an operations micropaleontologist and biostratigrapher for Unocal in Houston (Texas) from 1981–1985 before coming to the University of Delaware. He has taught introductory courses in physical geology and Earth

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