READING PASSAGES · ANSWER KEY

EARTH

All 3 reading levels · Sample answers shown — accept reasonable variations

Teacher tip: Answers shown are model responses. Many comprehension questions can be correctly answered in multiple ways — the goal is to check that students can pull key ideas from the text in their own words. For Level 1, accept any answer that shows comprehension; phrasing doesn't need to match.

1 EMERGING — AGES 6–8 · 4 QUESTIONS — Earth: Our Home

1. Why does Earth look blue from space?

A: *Earth looks blue from space because it has lots of water — oceans, lakes, and rivers.*

2. Name three things Earth has that help plants, animals, and people live here.

A: *Earth has air to breathe, warmth from the Sun, and rain to grow plants and food. (Accept any reasonable answers.)*

3. How many moons does Earth have?

A: *Earth has one Moon.*

4. How does the Moon look different on different nights?

A: *The Moon changes shape — from a thin crescent to a big full circle and back again.*

2 ON-GRADE — AGES 8–10 · 5 QUESTIONS — Earth: A Planet Just Right for Life

1. What is the "Goldilocks zone" and why is Earth lucky to be in it?

A: *The Goldilocks zone is the region around the Sun where temperatures are just right — not too hot, not too cold — for liquid water to exist on a planet's surface. Earth is in this zone, which is why life can exist here.*

2. Name two ways Earth's atmosphere helps protect life.

A: *Earth's atmosphere has the air we breathe (nitrogen and oxygen) AND it shields us from harmful rays from the Sun.*

3. What creates Earth's magnetic field, and what does it do?

A: *Earth's magnetic field is generated deep inside the planet's spinning iron core. It deflects dangerous particles from space — acting like a planet-sized force shield.*

4. What are tectonic plates, and what do they cause to happen?

A: *Tectonic plates are huge slabs of rock on Earth's surface that slowly move. They cause earthquakes and volcanoes, and slowly build mountains and open valleys.*

5. Why does Earth have four seasons?

A: *Earth's axis is tilted by 23.5 degrees. As Earth orbits the Sun, different parts get more or less direct sunlight at different times of the year, creating four seasons.*

3 ADVANCED — AGES 10–12 · 6 QUESTIONS — Earth: A Finely Balanced World

1. Why is liquid water so essential for life as we know it?

A: *Liquid water dissolves nutrients, transports them, and provides the medium for the chemical reactions of biology. All known life depends on it.*

2. Describe at least three jobs Earth's atmosphere does for us.

A: *The atmosphere provides air to breathe (oxygen, nitrogen), moderates surface temperatures, blocks harmful ultraviolet radiation, and burns up most incoming meteors. (Any three.)*

3. What would happen to a planet's atmosphere without a magnetic field, and what real-world example is given in the passage?

A: *Without a magnetic field, the solar wind from the Sun gradually strips away a planet's atmosphere. Mars is the real-world example — it lost most of its atmosphere this way.*

4. How do tectonic plates help keep Earth's climate stable?

A: *Tectonic plates recycle minerals and help regulate carbon dioxide in the atmosphere over millions of years, keeping Earth's climate relatively stable.*

5. What role does the Moon play in making Earth a stable place for life?

A: *The Moon's gravity stabilises Earth's axial tilt at 23.5 degrees, preventing the planet from wobbling wildly. This steady tilt gives us regular seasons and helps complex life to evolve.*

6. Why might Earth's combination of features be considered "finely balanced" rather than just lucky?

A: *Many features have to work together: right distance from the Sun, the right atmosphere, an active core for the magnetic field, plate tectonics, a stabilising Moon. Each one contributes to making Earth habitable — change one and life could be very different.*