SCHOLASTIC

Physical Map of the United States

Q: What mountains extend over 3,000 miles from New Mexico to Alaska?

A: The **Rocky Mountains**! This huge range starts at 8,000 feet above sea level and rises to 14,433 feet above sea level at the top of Mt. Elbert! Many rivers, including the Rio Grande, Colorado, and Snake rivers, start in the Rockies.

Tornadoes are...
Tubes of air with winds of up to 300 mph that extend from the tops of thunderstorm clouds to the ground and can occur anywhere in the United States.

Q: What carved out the basins of the five Great Lakes and filled them with water?

A: Glaciers! The Great Lakes are the largest group of fresh water lakes in the world. When cold air from Canada blows over these warm lakes, the lake water evaporates, causing snowstorms called lake-effect storms.

Nor'easters are...
Big winter storms in the northeastern United States that produce heavy rain or snow and can cause hurricane-force winds and floods.

Earthquakes are...
The rocking, shaking, or rolling that occurs when the earth's plates rub against each other deep under the surface of the planet.

Q: What makes Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Florida alike?

A: They have **tropical** (hot and humid) areas! The Florida Everglades spans the southernmost part of Florida, and is known for its rich wildlife. Hawaii and Puerto Rico have tropical rain forests!

Q: Where is Death Valley?

A: In California's **Mojave Desert**. It is the driest place in the United States. Death Valley gets less than 2 inches of rainfall a year. It has some of the highest temperatures in the world.

Q: Why is the crust of the earth (the outer part of the planet) constantly moving very, very slowly?

A: The earth's crust is actually many separate pieces of rock (each 50 to 250 miles thick), called **plates**, which are floating on top of **magma** (liquid rock) deep inside the earth. Most of the United States rests on the North American Plate, but states on the Pacific Coast lie across two other plates—the Pacific Plate and a smaller one called Juan de Fuca.

Hurricanes are...
Huge storms that develop over the warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico or southern Atlantic or Pacific Oceans and can measure up to 600 miles across, with winds of 75–200 mph.

Map Key
- National border
- State border
- National capital
- State capital
- Major river
- Great Continental Divide
- San Andreas Fault
- The Everglades

U.S. Territories and Outlying Areas

Average Annual Temperature

Map Key
- 10–20°F
- 20–30°F
- 30–40°F
- 40–50°F
- 50–60°F
- 60–70°F
- 70–80°F

Extreme Heat Areas: Hot areas where dangerous health conditions such as heat exhaustion can occur.

Average Annual Precipitation

Low Precipitation Areas: Areas where extremely dry grass and trees can catch fire very easily due to lightning or careless actions by people.

Map Key
- 0–8 inches
- 8–20 inches
- 20–30 inches
- 30–40 inches
- 40–50 inches
- over 50 inches

High Precipitation Areas: Areas where heavy rain, from hurricanes or other storms, can cause rivers to overflow and coastal areas to flood.

For additional information about preparing for the emergencies that can result from severe weather, visit www.ready.gov and click on *Ready Kids.*

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