

asthenosphere

a layer of partially molten material within the upper part of the mantle, upon which the lithosphere plates move

bog

a type of wetland that accumulates acidic peat, which is a deposit of dead plant material

colloids

small particles with very high surface-to-volume ratios formed by the combination of organic and mineral materials

continental drift

a theory that proposes that all the continents were once joined together in a giant supercontinent, which subsequently split apart, with the continents drifting away from one another to their present locations

desertification

the spread of desert-like conditions in arid and semi-arid regions

earthquakes

vibrations and shock waves caused by the sudden movements of tectonic plates along fracture zones, or faults, in the earth's crust

erosion

the wearing away of land by running water, rainfall, wind, ice or other geological agents

ferromagnesian minerals

minerals rich in iron and magnesium

geomorphology

the study of landforms, including their origin, evolution, form and distribution

gradation process

those processes that result from gravity and the sun's radiant energy and which act upon the surface of the lithosphere and bring it to a common level

land degradation

a decline in the quality of natural land resources, commonly caused by improper use by humans

landform

a specific physical feature of the earth's surface e.g. a plain, escarpment, valley, hill etc.

landuse

the range of uses that humans make of the earth's surface

leaching

the process by which soluble materials are dissolved and filtered down through the soil profile by percolating water

lithosphere

the outer shell of the earth, consisting of solid rock, soil and geological formations

mass movement

the downslope
movement of weathered
rock material under the
influence of gravity

soil

the loose material composed
of both mineral and organic
matter that covers the earth's
land surface

tectonic forces

disturbances in the earth's crust
that results from the earth's
internal energy and create physical
features, such as mountains, on
the earth's surface

tectonic plates

sections of the earth's crust
that move about as distinct
units on the asthenosphere
on which they rest

translocation

the movement of soil-
forming materials
through the developing
soil profile

volcanism

a process resulting in the upward movement and expulsion of molten material from within the earth to the surface, where it cools and hardens

weathering

the physical disintegration and chemical decomposition of rocks and minerals at or near the earth's surface by atmospheric and biological agents
