**Earthquakes**

**The surface of the earth, called the "crust," is not one solid piece. It's more like a 20 piece puzzle. Each puzzle piece is called a "plate." The plates constantly move. Fortunately for us, they don't move fast. Geologists estimate the fastest plate might shift 6 inches a year (15 centimeters). That's about as fast as your hair grows!**

**What is an Earthquake?**

**Earthquakes happen when a plate scrapes, bumps, or drags along another plate. When does this happen? Constantly. About a half-million earthquakes rock the Earth every day. That's millions a year. People don't feel most of them because the quake is too small, too far below the surface, or deep in the sea. Some, however, are so powerful they can be felt thousands of miles away.**

**Damage caused by Earthquakes**

**A powerful earthquake can cause landslides, tsunamis, flooding, and other catastrophic events. Most damage and deaths happen in populated areas. That's because the shaking can cause windows to break, structures to collapse, fire, and other dangers.**

**Fun Facts about Earthquakes**

* **The largest earthquake ever recorded in the world was in Chile in 1960. It measured a 9.6 on the Richter Scale.**
* **The largest in the US was a 9.2 magnitude in Alaska in 1964.**
* **They can cause huge waves in the ocean called tsunamis.**
* **Movement of tectonic plates has formed large mountain ranges like the Himalayas and the Andes.**
* **Earthquakes can happen in any kind of weather.**
* **Geologists cannot predict earthquakes. They hope they will in the future through continued research and improved technology**

