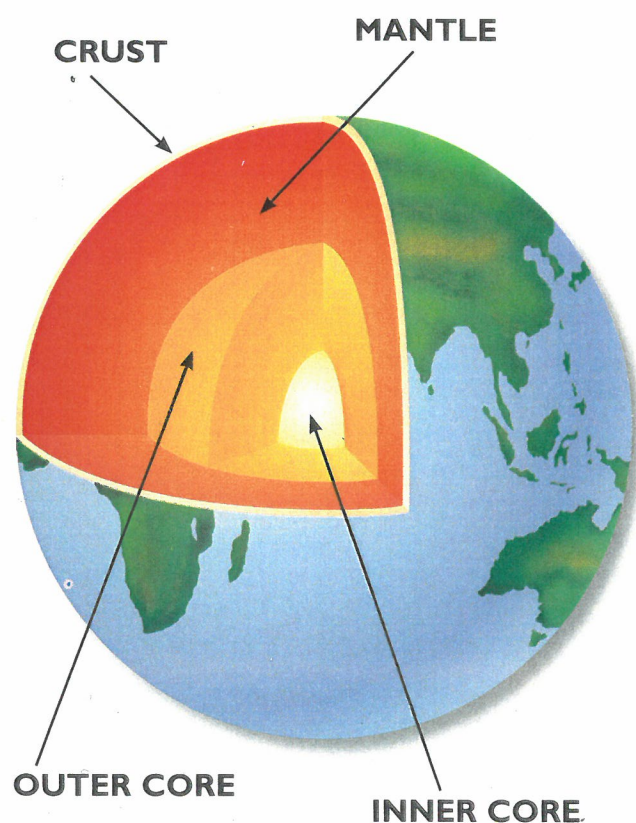


# OUR PLANET EARTH

**O**UR Earth is made of layers of rock. The diagram below shows the Earth with a slice cut out. The hottest part is the core, at the centre. Around the core is the mantle, which is probably slightly liquid and moves very slowly. The outer layer, the crust, is quite thin under the oceans, but it is thicker under the continents.

Scientists now know that the Earth's crust is cracked, like the shell of a hard-boiled egg that has been dropped. The cracks are called faults. The huge sections of crust divided by the faults are called plates and they are moving very, very slowly. The continents have gradually moved across the Earth's surface as the crustal plates have moved. Sudden movements near the faults cause volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. Undersea earthquakes cause huge waves called tsunamis.



▲ **The Earth from space:** this satellite image shows Africa, Arabia, the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. The Sahara Desert has no cloud and is all sunny. Some of the white clouds near the Equator show where there are thunderstorms.

Can you name the oceans to the west (left) and to the east (right) of Africa? And can you name the continent – and the country – on the far west (left) of this image? (The maps on pages 7 and 8 will help you. Answers on page 97.)

## FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT THE EARTH

**DISTANCE AROUND THE EQUATOR** 40,075 kilometres  
**DISTANCE AROUND THE POLES** 40,007 kilometres  
**DISTANCE TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH** 6370 kilometres  
**SURFACE AREA OF THE EARTH** 510,065,600 square kilometres  
**PROPORTIONS OF SEA AND LAND** 71% sea; 29% land  
**DISTANCE FROM THE EARTH TO THE SUN** 150,000,000 kilometres  
 (It takes 8½ minutes for the Sun's light to reach the Earth.)  
**DISTANCE FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON** 384,400 kilometres  
**THE EARTH TRAVELS AROUND THE SUN** at 107,000 kilometres per hour, or nearly 30 kilometres per second  
**THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE** is about 175 kilometres high  
**CHIEF GASES IN THE ATMOSPHERE** Nitrogen 78%; oxygen 21%  
**AVERAGE DEPTH OF SEA** 3900 metres  
**AVERAGE HEIGHT OF LAND** 880 metres