

The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart

Name: _____

Period: _____

1. Spanning _____ miles along the length of East Africa, the Great Rift is a complex of enormous valleys, volcanoes, and grassy plains.
2. The Great Rift was created when a plume of super-hot lava pushed up beneath Africa over millions of years. But once the whole area had been lifted more than a mile high, cracks appeared around the margins, creating the _____ on one side and the _____ on the other.
3. The Rift's rain-drenched mountains in turn feed Africa's mightiest _____.
4. At its Northern end, the Great Rift plunges into the _____ creating a dazzling world of coral and _____ hiding deep secrets.
5. All the water in the Rift begins as _____.
6. Converging trade winds create cloud masses which move up and down the length of Africa, producing _____ rainy seasons each year, bringing the landscape to life.
7. How many liters of water do African buffalo need to drink a day to help them digest dry grass? _____
8. As the buffaloes drink, fluttering oxpeckers get a chance to remove _____ and other parasites from their faces.
9. How many liters of water do elephants need to drink a day to survive? _____
10. River _____ provides excellent protection against the African sun.
11. Bee-eaters dig their nesting burrows in the vertical banks of Rift Valley rivers, which are only exposed in the _____ season once water levels have fallen.
12. The _____ is a predator of the bee-eater bird.
13. Hippos eat at _____ and spend the day digesting their dinner in the safety of the river.
14. Each stretch of river is controlled by a dominant _____, who tolerates other hippos in his patch so long as they behave themselves and defer to him.

15. At the peak of the dry season, an _____ epidemic sweeps through the crowded colony, killing dozens of hippos. Within a few hours, the hippo carcass has attracted more than a hundred _____ from far downstream. Croc's ultra-efficient _____ system allows these reptiles to eat diseased meat without getting sick.
16. Beneath the Great Rift's rolling hills, porous volcanic rocks channel water deep underground, sometimes for many miles. The subterranean water eventually pops out as a _____, like the one in Mzima in southern _____, feeding an oasis of crystal-clear streams and lakes.
17. Plunging six miles deep, Lake Tanganyika is Africa's greatest natural reservoir. It contains 30 trillion liters of water and stretches _____ miles along the Western Rift Valley.
18. Lake Malawi is famous for its extraordinary diversity of cichlids – more than a thousand unique varieties found nowhere else on Earth. What are cichlids? _____
19. Unlike most fish that release their eggs into open water, cichlids take great care of their young. Some sandy bottom species build _____-shaped nests where the male courts his female, then guards her brood until they have grown big enough to look after themselves.
20. Other baby cichlids have a truly bizarre relationship with their mother. When threatened, they take shelter in her _____. She then carries them around, waiting until the coast is clear before releasing them back into open water.
21. Why is Lake Malawi filled with so many different and unique types of cichlids?
22. Pack-hunting nyanda fish, 1.5 meters long, behave like sharks, using an _____ sense to hone in on the life signs of smaller fish hiding among the rocks. It's thought that they can even communicate using electrical signals to synchronize their _____ in the dark.
23. Name TWO species that can be found at the bottom of Lake Malawi?
24. What are the strange-tornado like clouds that form over the lake made of?
25. What do the midge larvae feed on?

26. Sardine-like usipa fish are caught by fisherman at _____.

27. What is Africa's largest lizard?

28. In Malawi's hot climate, it is hard to get fresh fish to distant markets so most is spread out to dry in the sun. Astonishingly, these tiny usipa provide essential protein for around _____ million people in countries bordering the lake.

29. What is the world's largest waterfall now called?

30. Lake Natron in Northern Tanzania, also known as the Lake of Death was formed through centuries of evaporation that has concentrated volcanic minerals to the point that they are so caustic that they can dissolve human skin. But one species thrives here, what is it?

31. What microorganisms do flamingos thrive on?

32. How do the flamingos survive walking through the caustic water of Lake Natron?

33. Volcanic minerals enrich Lake Bogoria's waters providing an ideal environment for even larger flocks of flamingoes. At the height of the season, there may be over a _____ birds.

34. Flamingoes are famous for their extraordinary _____ rituals.

35. What is the saltiest body of water on Earth (and also the lowest point in all of Africa)?

36. The Mandab Strait, also known as the Gate of Tears, separates Africa from Arabia and marks the junction of the Indian Ocean and the _____.

37. The corals in this area are home to more than a _____ species of fish.

38. The plankton bloom here attracts ocean giants, like _____ - the largest fish found on Earth.