Measure the Movement of Plates

IDEAS FOR SUPPLIES

push pins, thumb tacks, or masking tape ○ measuring tape or ruler

You'll need to have a lot of patience for this project. If you stick with it, you'll have a great understanding of how the continents move! Ask an adult to help you find a location where it is safe and acceptable to use pins that will remain undisturbed for at least a month. You don't want to use a nice wall in the house!

1 If you're using a wall, you'll want to start at the far end of one side. Other options include an outdoor tree or a series of branches or logs outside, as long as they'll remain undisturbed. If you're using masking tape, you can use the floor in a room of your house that doesn't get used.

2 Place a pin or piece of masking tape at the far end of your chosen location. If you're using tape, you can write the date on it. If you're using pins, just write down the date you start in your science journal.

3 The next day, come back to your location. Using your ruler or measuring tape, measure 1 inch away from your first location and place another pin or piece of tape. Come back the next day and do the same thing. You'll do this every day for one whole month!

4 At the end of the month, measure the distance from the very first mark to the last. It should be equal to the number of days you've been doing this project. Have a helper stand at the first marker, while you stand at the last. Does it look closer or farther than you thought?

THINK ABOUT IT: The plates of the planet move about 1 inch every year. How many years are represented by your entire project? Does that seem far for plates to move apart over that length of time? What if each inch of your project represented 10 years? How far would the plates have moved in that length of time? Try to figure out how far plates will move over your entire life. How far have they moved during your parents' lives?