

GIANTS of the Earth

by Lisa McKlow

Set Your Purpose

What are the largest trees
on Earth and where are
they? Read this article
to find out.

Think of your favorite tree. Is it big? Next to a **towering** sequoia, it would probably look tiny.

Sequoias are very special trees. They are some of the largest and oldest living things on Earth.

Once, there were many different kinds of sequoias. Now, there are only two kinds left. These are the coastal redwoods and the big trees. The **coastal** redwoods grow near the Pacific Ocean. The coastal redwoods are the tallest trees on Earth. Many are over 300 feet tall. That is as tall as a 30-story

building! The area where these trees grow is **nicknamed** "the Land of the Giants."

The big trees, or giant sequoias, do not grow along the coast. They are **located** farther inland, in California. The big trees are much wider and heavier than the coastal redwoods. Think of a giraffe and an elephant. This will give you an idea of the difference between the two kinds of sequoias. The coastal redwoods are the

“giraffes.” The big trees are the “elephants.”

The biggest sequoia of all is a big tree called General Sherman. It is one of the most **massive** living things on Earth. This tree is 275 feet tall. It is not as tall as some of the redwoods, but its trunk is the widest. It is more than 100 feet around. Scientists think it weighs more than 6,000 tons!

Sequoias take a long time to get so big. Humans grow for about 20 years, then they stay the same height. Sequoias keep growing as long as they live, and that can be a long time! Scientists say that General Sherman is between 3,000 and 4,000 years old. Think of everything that tree has seen in its lifetime!

Think About It

What did you find out about the largest trees on Earth?

Did You Know?

- The sequoia trees were named after a great Cherokee leader.
- General Sherman was a famous American soldier.

Name _____

Date _____

Check Your Understanding

Fill in the letter with the best answer for each question.

- What is the main idea of this selection?
 - Some trees are more than 3,000 years old.
 - Sequoias—redwoods and big trees—are the largest living things in the world.
 - Redwoods and big trees both grow in California.
 - A tree named General Sherman is the biggest tree in the world.
- What makes coastal redwoods special?
 - They are the heaviest trees in the world.
 - They are the most beautiful trees in the world.
 - They are the widest trees in the world.
 - They are the tallest trees in the world.
- The big tree called General Sherman is
 - nicknamed “big tree.”
 - one of the most massive living things on Earth.
 - as tall as the coastal redwoods.
 - the heaviest thing on Earth.
- Which sentence is not true?
 - Redwoods live in the Land of the Giants.
 - Sequoias take a long time to get so big.
 - Some sequoias are 3,000 years old.
 - Sequoias grow all over the United States.
- Why do sequoias grow so big?
 - They keep growing as long as they live.
 - They grow for about 20 years.
 - They live for more than 4,000 years.
 - They grow near the Pacific Ocean.

Vocabulary

Find each vocabulary word in the selection. The words and sentences around it will help you figure out its meaning.

Fill in the letter with the best definition of the underlined word.

- Next to a towering redwood, most trees look tiny.

(A) made of metal	(C) very tall
(B) angry	(D) very heavy
- The coastal redwoods grow near the Pacific Ocean.

(A) like a roller coaster	(C) to slide down a hill
(B) mysterious	(D) along the coast
- The area where the coastal redwoods grow is nicknamed “the Land of the Giants.”
 - given a name that describes a special feature
 - figured out a tree’s height
 - decided how much a tree weighs
 - cut down
- The big trees are located inland.

(A) growing	(C) stored
(B) in a place	(D) at the shore
- The big tree called General Sherman is one of the most massive living things on Earth.

(A) bossy	(C) full of lumps
(B) enormous	(D) interesting

Name _____

Date _____

Word Work

A **suffix** is an ending that changes the meaning of a base word. Knowing the meaning of a suffix helps you figure out the meaning of the whole word. The suffix **-er** means "more than." The suffix **-est** means "the most." For example:

deeper having more depth

quietest the most quiet

Sometimes, if the word ends in a *y*, the *y* is changed into an *i* before **-er** or **-est** is added. For example:

happy + er = happier

Write the base word for each of the following words. Remember, sometimes adding a suffix changes the spelling of the base word!

6. oldest _____

7. laziest _____

8. wiser _____

9. sleepest _____

10. harder _____

Write the word that fits the definition by adding **-er** or **-est** to the base word.

1. is more kind kind _____

2. is the most tall tall _____

3. is the most pretty pretty _____

4. is more green green _____

5. is more rich rich _____

Write Now

In the selection "Giants of the Earth," you learned some special things about sequoia trees. You could organize the information from the selection into a chart like the one at right.

- Plan to write a poem from the point of view of a sequoia or an interesting tree that grows near your home. First, write down ideas about what makes the tree special. Then think about what the world must look like from the tree's point of view. What can the tree see from where it stands? What changes has the tree seen during its lifetime? What might the tree say if it could speak? Jot down your ideas.
- Write your poem. Remember to write from the point of view of a tree. Use your notes to give you ideas.

Main Idea

among the oldest living things on Earth

among the largest living things on Earth

Supporting Details

1. can live to be more than 3,000 years old

1. can be over 300 feet tall

2. can weigh up to 6,000 tons

3. keeps growing as long as it lives