

# Look Out Below!

- 1 Imagine an enormous hole in the ground as wide as a football field and 90 feet deep. A hole like that swallowed an entire house, a car dealership, and a public pool. It also destroyed a public road. The sinkhole was a limestone cavern that opened directly beneath a house in Winter Park, Florida. During 1981, the Winter Park Sinkhole became a popular tourist attraction.
- 2 A sinkhole is the erosion of land that creates a hole in the ground. Water dissolves minerals in the ground, leaving a buried hole. When the hole becomes large, the land above it caves in. Limestone, especially, collapses because it is soft and disintegrates in water. Sinkholes can also result from the actions of people. Old mines collapse, for example, causing sinkholes. Sinkholes are often found in Florida, Texas, Alabama, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania.
- 3 Think of a sinkhole as a kitchen drain in the earth. Rainwater flows through it into the earth. If there is any garbage in a sinkhole, the pollution filters through into underground rivers and lakes. These rivers and lakes provide our drinking water. At one time, farmers dumped trash in sinkholes on their land until they realized the trash polluted groundwater.
- 4 Professionals now use technology to detect sinkholes. Thermal and electrical waves can identify where a sinkhole may form. If a sinkhole appears in a populated area, crews can fill it to avoid further danger.
- 5 However, not all sinkholes are bad. Some provide habitats for wildlife. Sinkhole critters include insects, birds, burrowing animals, and wetland animals. If a sinkhole is deemed safe, people can explore it for unusual plant life. Devil's Millhopper Geological State Park in Florida, for example, features a 120-foot deep sinkhole. Exploring the park is like taking a trip back in time. Ferns grow along its slopes. Fossil shark teeth, marine shells, and the remains of extinct land animals have been found. Great care is taken to protect such sinkhole habitats. The plants and animals there may be unique to that sinkhole.

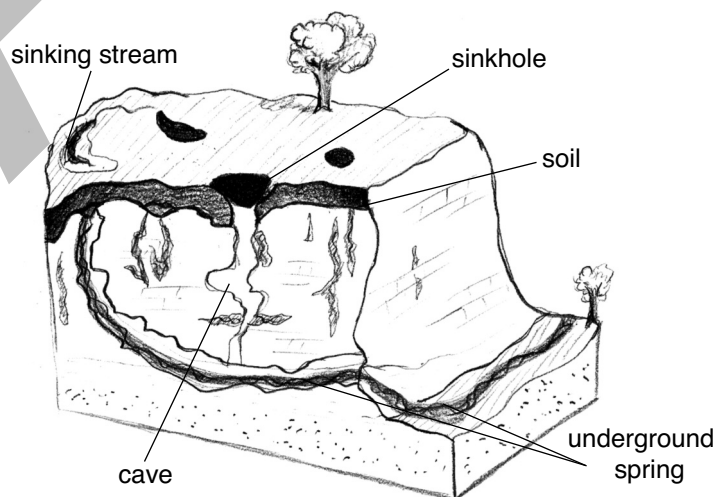


Figure 1

Use “Look Out Below!” to answer questions 28–31.

6.8D (Informational—Thesis/Patterns) L

28. According to the passage, which of the following is a possible benefit of sinkholes?
- A Work crews can fill sinkholes that occur in populated areas.
  - B Sinkholes can control erosion of the soil by dissolving minerals.
  - C Scientists have special equipment to detect sinkholes underground.
  - D Sinkholes can create unique underground habitats for plants and animals.

6.6C (Response—Text Evidence) L

29. Which paragraph provides the most information about how a sinkhole forms?
- A Paragraph 1
  - B Paragraph 2
  - C Paragraph 3
  - D Paragraph 4

6.5H (Comprehension—Synthesize) H

30. Based on information in the passage, the reader can conclude that sinkholes—
- A can form anywhere on the earth
  - B form only under certain conditions
  - C provide the safest habitats for wildlife
  - D cause most water pollution on the earth

6.5H (Comprehension—Synthesize) M

31. Based on the information in the passage, which element best represents the origin of the sinkhole shown in the diagram on page 21?
- A Cave
  - B Mine
  - C Sinking stream
  - D Soil