How Glaciers Change the World
By ReadWorks

Glaciers are large masses of ice that can be found in either the oceans or on land. These large bodies of frozen water have big effects on the formation of different parts of the world, especially valleys. Valleys were formed during the Ice Age, a time where many places were cold and covered with ice. As the Ice Age ended, the glaciers began to melt. As they did, they left behind unique land formations.

Glaciers are formed from large amounts of snow and ice. Because the Ice Age was a time of freezing temperatures, glaciers became very common in many parts of the world. They were especially common in North America and Europe. As these masses of ice grew, they began to cover large areas of land. Some glaciers came together to form bigger ones, just like different streams of water join to form bigger rivers. As they slowly moved, these massive glaciers began to shape the landscape.

Glaciers shape the landscape in a process called erosion. Erosion is the result of the friction of wind, water, or, in this case, ice against rocks and soil. Glaciers changed many landscapes, leaving behind waterfalls and moraines,
which are very rocky landscapes created by glacial debris. They created places that had U-shapes, or valleys. Valleys have very steep, high land ranges with flat land in the middle. They are very common in North America and northern Europe. Yosemite National Park in California is one of the most famous valleys in the world. Other famous valleys are in Scotland and Austria.

But these landscapes could not be seen until thousands of years ago, when the Ice Age began to end and the earth started to naturally warm up. As temperatures began to rise, some of the glaciers melted, and the U-shaped valleys began to appear. Most of these valleys had existed before the Ice Age, but they had a V-shape, because they had been created through erosion by water flowing in rivers. But the glaciers made these valleys wider and sometimes left behind wider rivers filled with fresh water.

Although the Ice Age ended 10,000 years ago, there are still many glaciers in the world. Most of them are found in Antarctica and Greenland, but there are glaciers on nearly every continent. Today many glaciers are either breaking apart or melting. Some scientists say this could be because of climate change caused by humans. Just as they did thousands of years ago, glaciers change the landscape of many places. Many geologists are keeping an eye on these melting glaciers to see how the earth may be affected by them.