

Hot lava from deep underground bubbled up through cracks, or fissures, beneath the earth's surface.

The lava hit the ocean, cooled, and began to contract, or shrink.

## Rock Stars

By Robert Lerosé

Columns of rock stretch along four miles of Northern Ireland's coastline like a monster's stepping stones. These columns, called the Giant's Causeway, formed about 60 million years ago.

It kept contracting until it cracked—a natural process that often forms columns.

The dense volcanic rock that resulted is called basalt (buh-SALT).



Some columns are 82 feet high. That's 14 refrigerators tall!

The Causeway has about 40,000 columns. Each has five, six, or seven sides, depending on how the rock cooled.