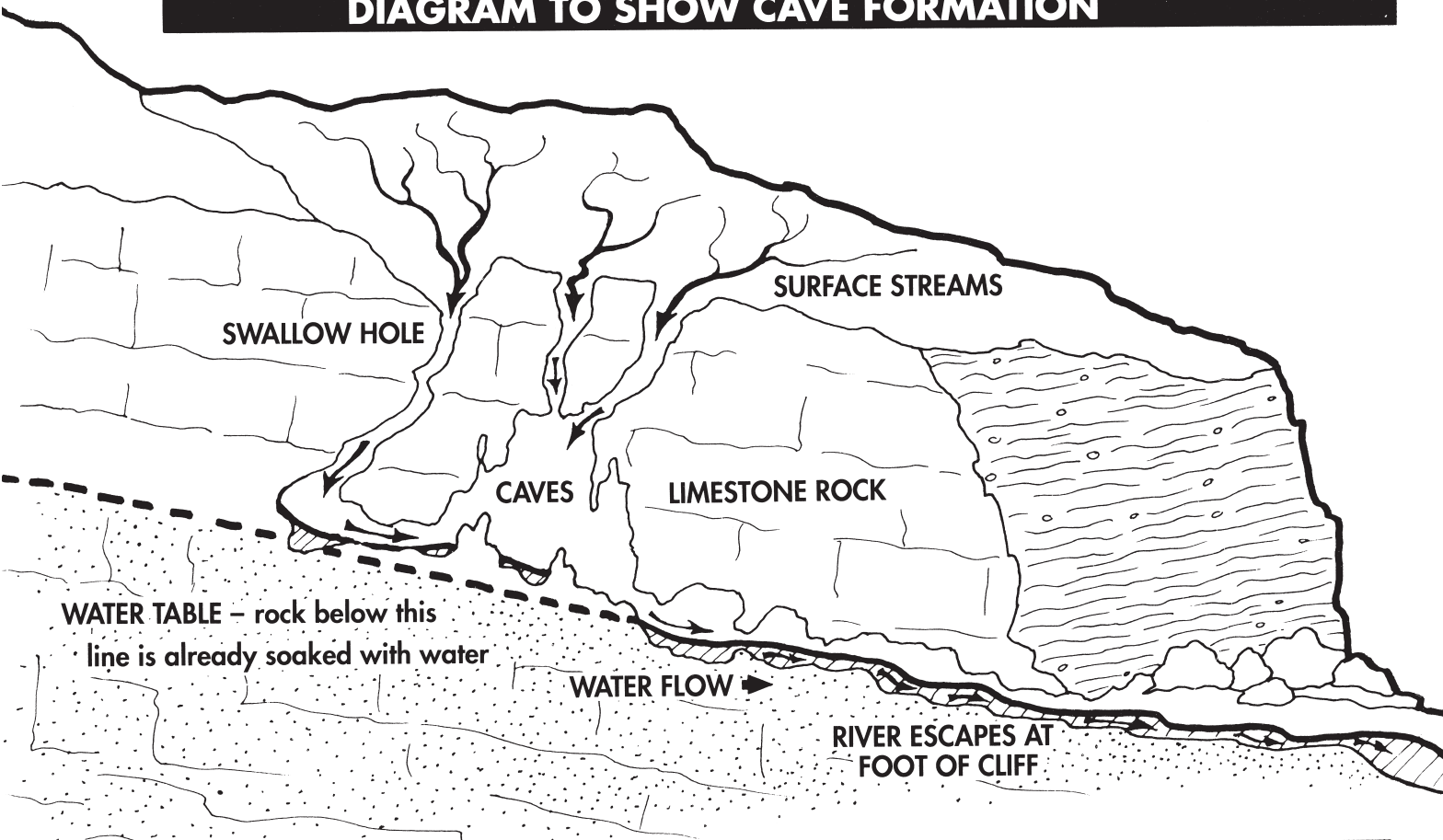


HOW CAVES ARE FORMED

Caves take thousands of years to form and are usually found in areas of limestone rock. When rainwater falls on limestone it mixes with minerals in the soil to form a weak acid. This dissolves small cracks and weaknesses in the rock. Swallow holes develop and surface streams disappear underground. Here, the water carves its way through the limestone forming caves and passageways.

Eventually the water reaches the water table. This is a line below which the rock is totally full of water. The surface water is forced along this line, forming an underground river. The level of the water table may change over a period of thousands of years. Every time the water table moves the river has to find a new route of escape. This often leaves some of the caves and passageways it has created empty and dry enough to explore.

DIAGRAM TO SHOW CAVE FORMATION



Questions

1. Caves are usually found in areas of _____ rock.
2. Surface _____ disappear underground down _____ holes.
3. The _____ is a line below which the rock is totally _____ of water.
4. Complete the diagram using different colours for the streams and river, limestone, hillside and the rock below the water table.