

### Short Essay: Surface Mining

**Directions:** Type your answers in the space below each question. Then compare your answer to the sample answer.

#### Questions

1. What is overburden and what are spoils?
2. What happens to the overburden produced by mountaintop removal?
3. What type of surface mining is most appropriate for ores that are near the surface in horizontal beds?

**Sample Answers**

1. Overburden is the material that is removed from Earth's surface to get at mineral ore deposits. It is a waste product that is deposited in huge piles called spoils.
2. The overburden is usually dumped at some lower elevation, and it is called valley fill. Often, this practice can bury low-elevation streams, which is environmentally harmful. This practice is highly controversial.
3. Strip mining is used to extract ores that are near the surface in horizontal beds.