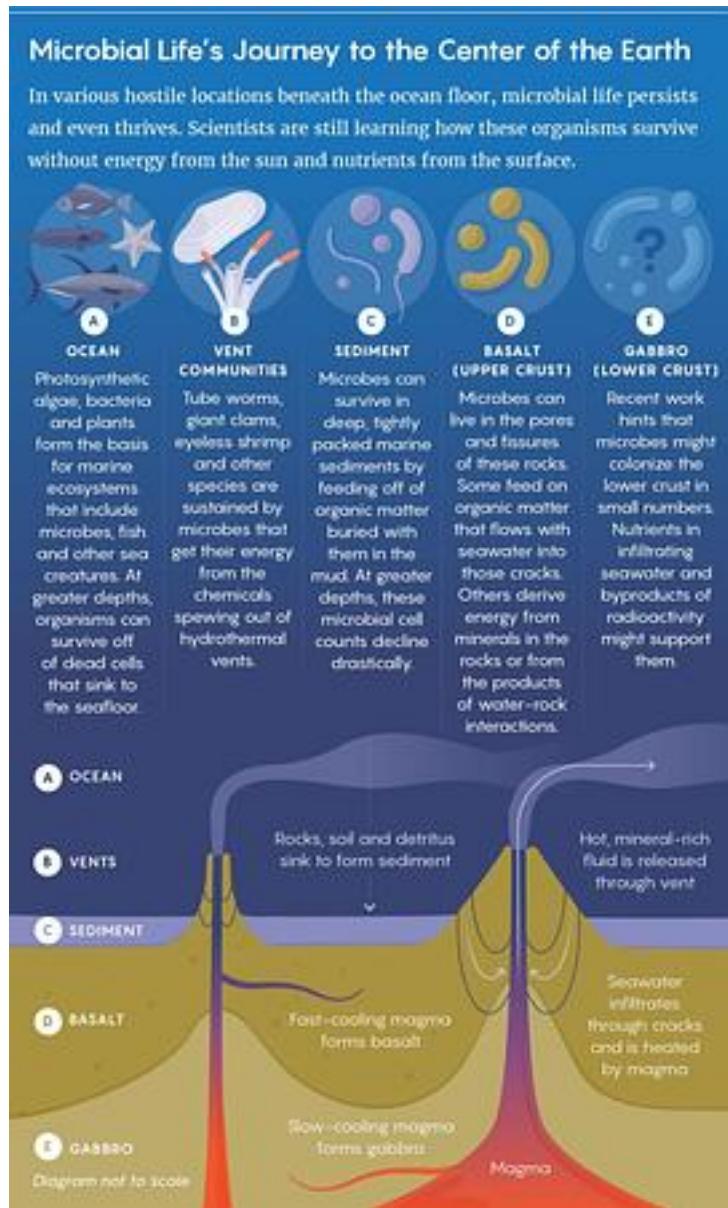


Extending the Upper Temperature Limit for Life



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The upper temperature limit for life is a key parameter for delimiting when and where life might have evolved on a hot, early Earth; the depth to which life exists in the Earth's subsurface; and the potential for life in hot, extraterrestrial environments. A combination of geological and microbiological evidence suggests that electron transport to Fe(III) may have been the first form of microbial respiration as life evolved (1–3). Geological evidence suggests that microorganisms that use Fe(III) as an electron acceptor are key components of the deep, hot biosphere (1, 4). Furthermore, the accumulation of Fe(III) in hot sediments around marine hydrothermal vents might have led to Fe(III) reduction being an important process in modern hydrothermal environments.

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