

Teaching the Five Themes of Geography Using the Newspaper



Location
Place
Human/Environment Interaction
Movement
Regions

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LOCATION

Every point on Earth has a specific location that is determined by an imaginary grid of lines denoting latitude and longitude. Parallels of latitude measure distances north and south of the line called the Equator. Meridians of longitude measure distances east and west of the line called the Prime Meridian. Geographers use latitude and longitude to pinpoint a place's absolute or exact location.

To know the *absolute* location of a place is only part of the story. It is also important to know how that place is related to other places- in other words, to know that place's *relative* location. Relative location deals with the interaction that occurs between and among places. It refers to the many ways- by land, by water, even by technology- that places are connected.

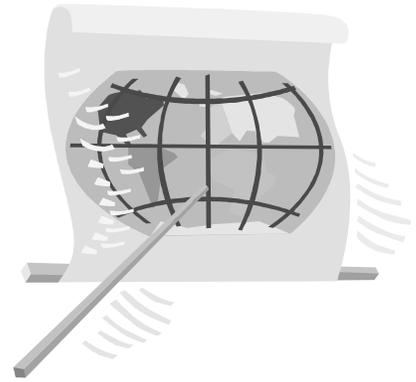
The theme of location is the basis of geographic education. It asks the question "Where is it?" Every day we are faced with opportunities to answer such a question. As we watch the news or read the newspaper, we organize the information we hear in many ways. One category always exists- location. **Everything happens somewhere.**



LOCATION

ACTIVITY #1

LINKING NEWS WITH LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE



Divide the class into cooperative groups of three students each. Provide each group with the latitude and longitude coordinates of a place where a recent current event has taken place. Have each group use the coordinates to pinpoint the location of the news event on the world map. Then instruct the group to look through the newspaper and find a news article whose setting matches the provided coordinates. Have each group share a summary of the news event and its coordinate setting with the rest of the class.

Latitude _____ Longitude _____ Location _____

5Ws:

WHO:

WHAT:

WHERE:

WHEN:

WHY:

Summary of news article:

LOCATION
ACTIVITY #2



PRO SPORTS AND GEOGRAPHY

- Provide students with the names of all the professional football teams (or any other sport's team). Challenge the students to locate each football city on a map and then write the latitude and longitude coordinates beside the city's name on the list.
- Read through the Sport's Pages to find out where your local team will travel for a road trip. Determine what states the team will travel through, how many miles they will travel, and what the probable route will be. Compare and contrast the geography of the visiting city with your own. What famous landmarks might the team see as they visit this city? Look at the weather page to determine the weather your team may encounter.
- Compare and contrast the locations of the opponents in a major sport's event. (e.g. the teams facing each other in the World Series or Super Bowl) How are the cities alike? How are they different? Compare location, climate, geographic features, economy, or any other characteristics.

LOCATION
ACTIVITY #3

AROUND THE WORLD



Mount a political map of the world on a wall. Challenge students to collect newspaper articles featuring as many different countries as possible. As a student reports on a country, place a colored pin on that country. Students receive bonus points for being the first to find an article about a country not previously identified. The more obscure the country, the higher the number of points awarded. For example, more points are earned for an article about Finland than China.

LOCATION ACTIVITY #4



LOOK AT THE STATE I'M IN

Collect state and regional maps from around the United States. Cut selected pieces from those maps. Have students guess which state the pieces are from. Provide clues using interesting place names, all-too-common place names and a few book settings.

You might want to make a mystery for the students by saying,

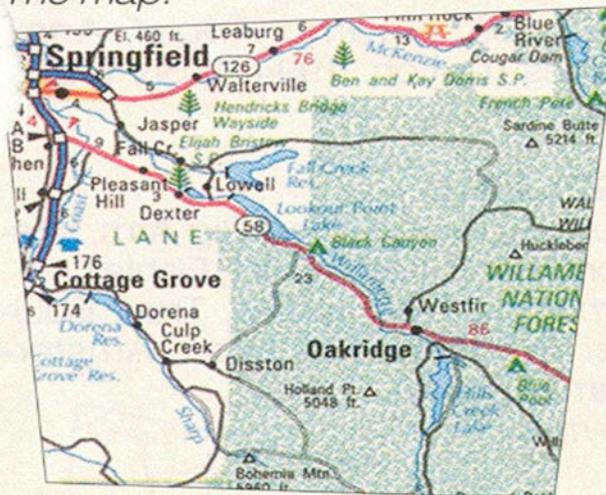
"I seem to be lost. I know I'm near Hohokus and only ten miles from Westfield but I know I'm not in Massachusetts. I have only this scrap of roadmap. Someone told me "Are you there, God? It's Margaret" was set here. Can you tell me where I am?"

PUZZLE #4

Unusual place names: Three Sisters, Sweet Home, Nonpareil, Drain.

Common place names: Dallas, Lexington, Green, Glasgow, Jacksonville, Toledo, Bunker Hill.

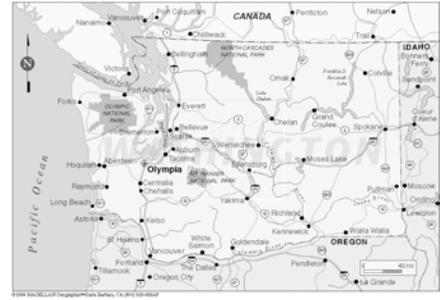
The map:



*The book: Eloise McGraw, *The Money Room* (Macmillan, 1981, ISBN 0-689-50208-7).*

LOCATION ACTIVITY #5

DESIGN A COUNTRY



Challenge students to dream up their own countries and to create maps of those countries. The maps should show natural (rivers, mountains) and man-made (highways, major cities) features. Students should name their countries, decide which products will provide the economic basis of their country, and include any significant landmarks or tourist attractions. Be sure they include a key for the map.

Name of Country:

Natural features:

Man-made features:

Climate:

Exports:

Tourist Attractions:

PLACE

All places have characteristics that give them meaning and character and distinguish them from other places on earth. Geographers describe places by their physical and human characteristics. Physical characteristics include such elements as animal life. Human characteristics of the landscape can be noted in architecture, patterns of livelihood, land use and ownership, town planning, and communication and transportation networks. Languages, as well as religious and political ideologies, help shape the character of a place. Studied together, the physical and human characteristics of places provide clues to help students understand the nature of places on the earth.

Place is a theme of geography that conjures up a mental picture of a place with people going about their everyday lives in the familiar environment. *Place is the personality of geography.*

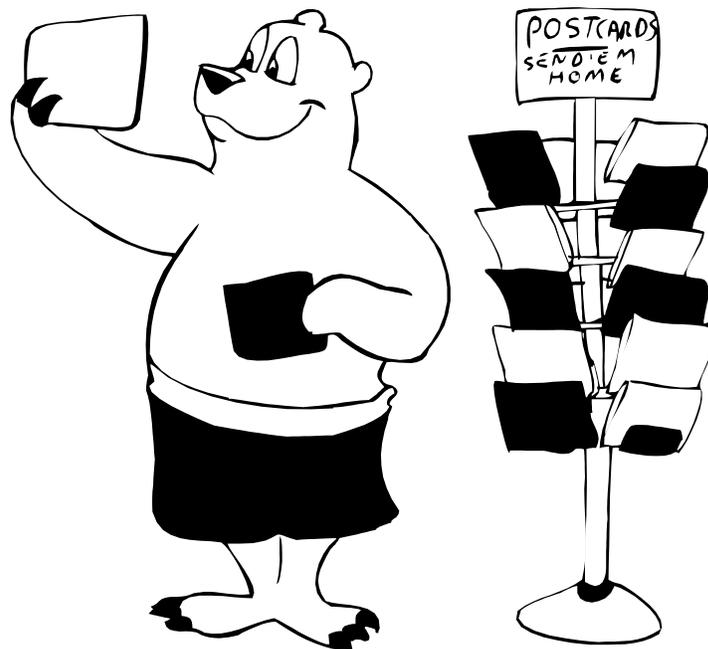


PLACE
ACTIVITY #1

MYSTERY POSTCARDS

Using articles from the Travel section of the newspaper , collect information about a travel destination. On one side of a postcard, draw an image representative of your place. On the other side, write a message that provides readers with several clues about the place. Do not include the name of your location. Be sure to include lots of detailed information to help your classmates appreciate the "personality" of the place you are describing.

Post the postcards on a bulletin board and number each card. Students will have a week to read all the cards on their own and to jot down their best guesses as to the place. At the end of the week, students can turn over the cards to learn the correct answers. Who correctly guessed the most places?



PLACE
ACTIVITY #2

WEATHER REPORT

Assign each student the name of a city. On the first day of the week (or whenever you receive newspapers), students will collect information about the weather in that city. Students can compare from week to week and plot high and low temperatures over the course of a school year.

Which city has the warmest year-round weather? The coolest?

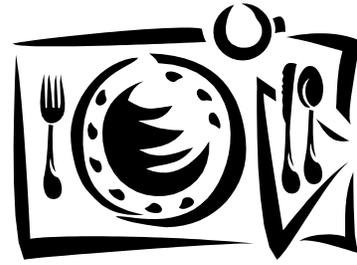
Which city has the widest range of temperatures?

Which city has weather most like the weather in your city?



PLACE
ACTIVITY #3

"IN YOUR PLACE"



"Place setting"

Brainstorm a list of common phrases that include the word "place". For example, "*to put someone in their place*" or "*caught between a rock and a hard place*".

1. How do these phrases help define the word "place"?
2. Do the phrases imply physical and human characteristics? If so, how?
3. Why are we comfortable in some places but not in others?
4. Describe a literal and figurative place in which you have found yourself. Describe whether you were comfortable or uncomfortable in such places.
5. Find someone in today's newspaper who is in a "bad place" either mentally or physically. Describe their situation and a possible solution to get them out of that "bad place".

PLACE ACTIVITY #4

AMBASSADORS

Divide the class into groups of approximately five students. Have each group choose a country that has been featured in the newspaper recently. Tell each group that they will be playing the role of United States Ambassador to that country. Use information from the newspaper to help students answer the following questions.

1. What kind of place is each country?
2. What unique qualities must an ambassador possess in order to adequately represent the United States in that place?
3. Imagine that a natural disaster has occurred in the country to which you are posted (earthquake, flood, and tornado, for example). What physical characteristics of the country might influence the crisis?
4. What human characteristics of the place might affect the citizen's ability to deal with the crisis?



PLACE
ACTIVITY #5

THE MOST FASCINATING PLACE IN THE WORLD

You have been selected to write a commercial for a country (choose a country that has been featured in the newspaper recently). How can you make your commercial message informative and appealing? Use the following form to help you gather facts, brainstorm catchy phrases, and create inviting descriptions. Invite tourists to come and see the "most fascinating place in the world!"



Describe the location using descriptive phrases
(Nestled on the east coast, tucked between,
etc)

What special activities are available for people
interested in exercising, history, shopping, etc

What are the people like (the physical
characteristics, ancestries, attitudes,
occupations, etc)

Write a *slogan* - a brief, attention-getting
phrase- to promote tourism in your country.

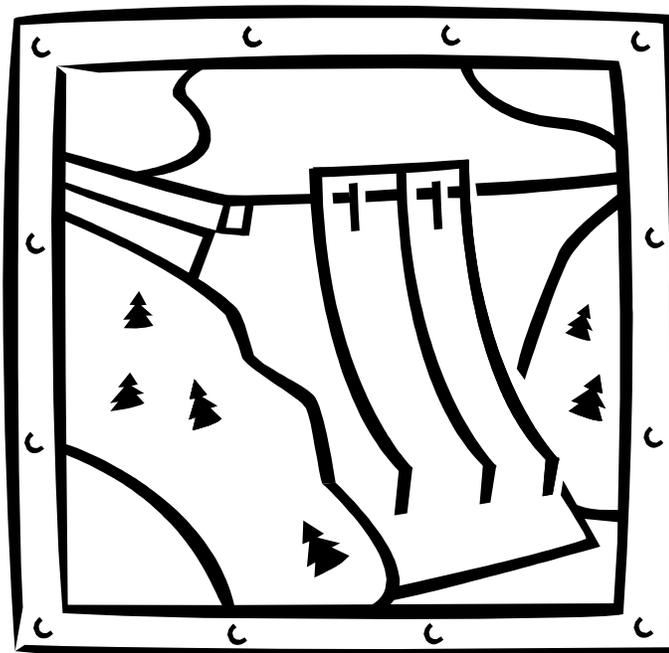
Describe particular customs, special
celebrations, or holidays.

Draw a simple logo or design to represent your
country.

HUMAN/ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

How do people affect the environment? How does the environment affect people? Looking at the effect that each has on the other is another important part of studying geography.

The environment means different things to different people depending on their cultural backgrounds and technological resources. In studying human/environment interaction, geographers look at all the effects-positive and negative- that occur when people interact with their surroundings. Sometimes a human act, such as damming a river to prevent flooding or to provide irrigation, requires consideration of the potential consequences. The construction of Hoover Dam on the Colorado River, for example, changed the natural landscape, but it also created a reservoir that helps provide water and electric power for the arid Southwest. Studying the consequences of human/environment interaction helps people plan and manage the environment responsibly.

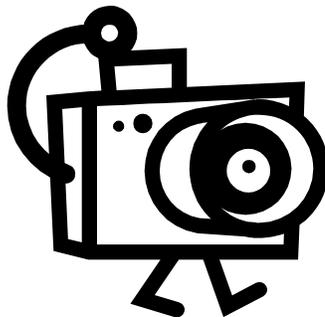


HUMAN/ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION ACTIVITY # 1

THEN AND NOW

Take a field trip to the library or Historical Society. Collect representative photographs, both old and new, of your town or city and photocopy them. Old editions of the local newspaper would be a great resource for this. In the classroom, compare all of the photographs, and have students articulate their observations of how places and people have changed over the years

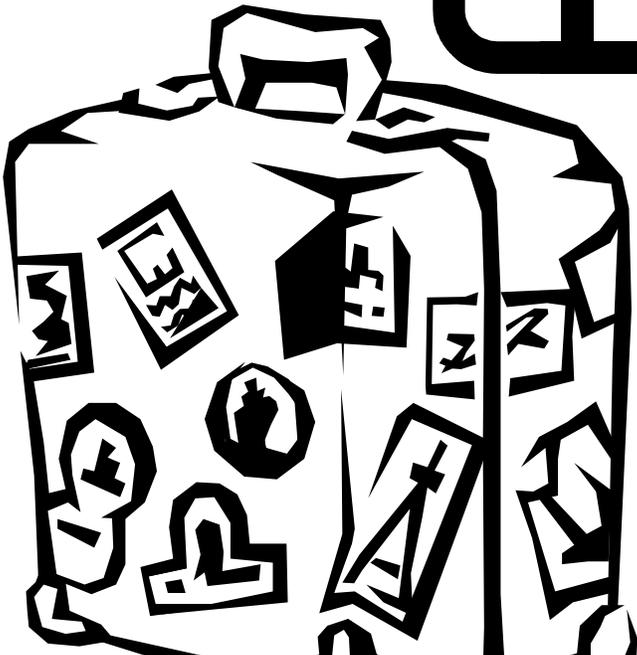
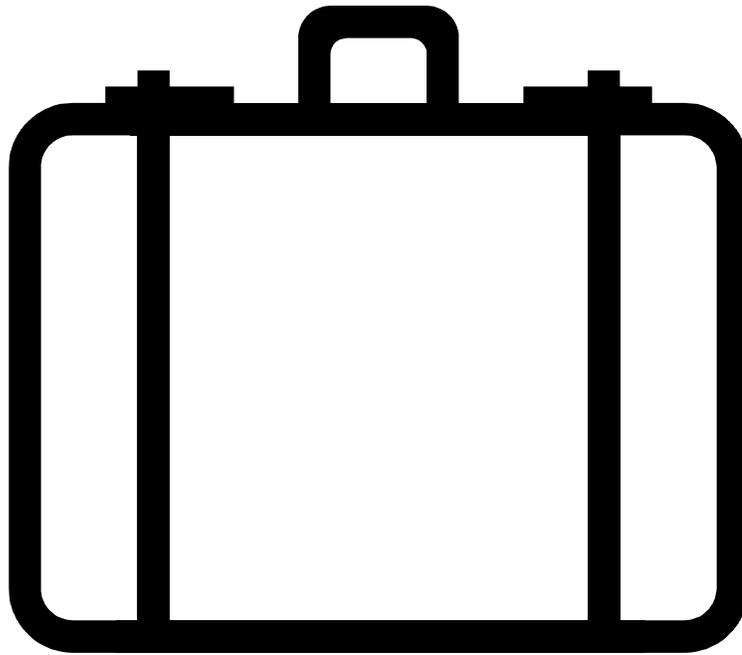
1. How is the town different in appearance today from the way it looked many years ago?
2. Are there more buildings? Different kind of buildings?
3. What are the differences in the kind of transportation?
4. Are there as many trees in the older photographs as there are in newer ones?
5. List some of the ways the people of your town or city have changed the environment over the years.



HUMAN/ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION ACTIVITY # 2

PACK YOUR BAGS

The Travel Section of your newspaper can provide valuable information about a part of the world you may know little about. Read a travel article about a city, country, or region you find interesting. Based on the information gathered from the article, plan a packing list of what you will carry in your luggage or backpack. Be prepared to explain why all the things you have packed are necessary or desired for your particular location.



HUMAN/ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION
ACTIVITY # 3



IT'S HAPPENING IN.....

Complete this news article to report on an important news event happening in a country of your choosing.

<p>Name the country (and city) in which the news story took place.</p>	<p>Briefly describe the event.</p>	<p>Will this affect the United States? Explain.</p>
<p>Describe the country's location. Name the individuals that the story is about.</p>	<p>How will this affect neighboring countries?</p>	<p>Describe how you feel about this event.</p>

HUMAN/ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION ACTIVITY # 4

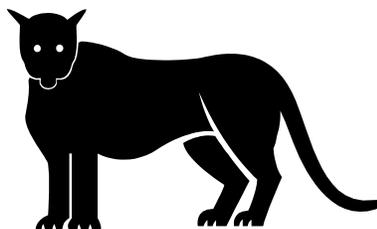
EVERYTHING COUNTS

To illustrate the importance of saving endangered species and the impact of losing a species on the eco-system, have students do the following exercise. You can use the paragraph below or a short newspaper article.

The mountain lion had left her two kittens hidden in a cave high in the canyon wall. As she hunted for food, she suddenly caught the scent of people and dogs. Before the hunters saw her, the big cat swiftly climbed the rocks of the canyon, moving silently and keeping out of sight of her enemies. When the mountain lion was certain that she had not been followed, she returned to her kittens and curled her warm body around them. Tomorrow, she would take them far away with her and go deeper into the wilderness, far away from the humans who hunted with dogs and guns.

Once the mountain lion's range covered most of North, Central, and South America. This big cat is known by many names, including cougar, panther, and puma. Some Indians worshipped the cat. "Puma" comes from the language of the Inca Indians of Peru. It meant courage and power.

- With a marker, cross out all the "t"s in this article. Can you still determine the meaning without the "t"s?
- Cross out all the "e"s in the article. Can you still make sense of the article? What is the impact of eliminating two of the letters from the text?
- Cross out all the "r"s in the article. Can you still make sense of the article?
- How many letters can you eliminate before the text is incomprehensible? Equate the elimination of letters with the elimination of species in our eco-system.



HUMAN/ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

ACTIVITY # 5



AFFECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Have students list ways that people affect their environment every day (for example, driving cars, using water, disposing of garbage, smoking cigarettes). Make a second list of ways that people affect their environment through seasonal activities (for example, watering lawns, burning leaves, fishing and hunting). Look through the newspaper to find examples of both kinds of activities.

Make a comparison chart of the two lists and have students discuss which activities are more harmful or more helpful to their environment.

Discuss the findings and have students suggest ways that people can change their behavior and improve their environment.

Everyday activities	Harmful to environment	Helpful to environment	Seasonal activities	Harmful to environment	Helpful to environment

MOVEMENT

People interact with other people, places, and things almost every day of their lives. They travel from one place to another, they communicate with each other; and they rely upon products, information, and ideas that come from beyond their immediate environment.

When considering the theme of movement as a way to study geography, one should ask these five W questions: who, what, where, when, and why do things, people, and information move? Also, how do they move? There are patterns of movement which make our lives in the United States predictable and orderly. Sometimes these patterns are interrupted and people feel a ripple effect from the system breakdown. Many countries, however, do not have a pattern of movement to depend on and this can worsen things such as famine or wartime relief efforts.

Students should be able to recognize where resources are located, who needs them, and how they are transported over the earth's surface. The theme of movement helps students understand how they themselves are connected with, and dependent upon, other regions, cultures, and people in the world.

Movement is very important to the study of geography because it can contribute to the development of the human characteristics of a place, such as cultural traits, governmental practices, and tolerance of diversity.



MOVEMENT ACTIVITY # 1

GOING TO CHURCH

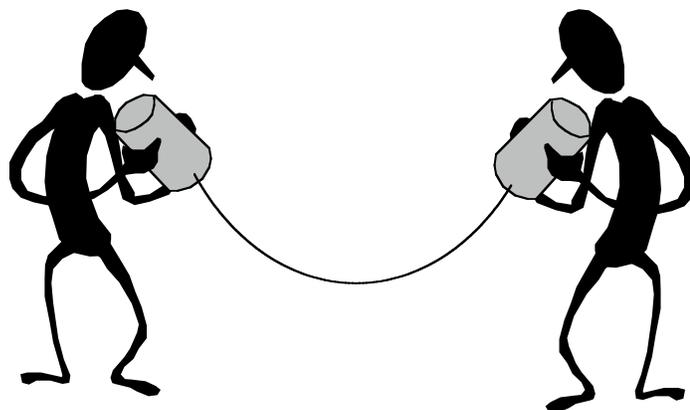
- Use the Religion section of the newspaper or the telephone book to compile a list of the different religious groups in your area.
- Use an encyclopedia or the Internet to research the origins of selected groups.
- Plot the origins of each group on the map of the world.
- What are some of the reasons that these religious groups might have moved to the United States?
- What are the historical, political, and cultural factors involved?



MOVEMENT ACTIVITY # 2

HOW DO IDEAS TRAVEL FROM PLACE TO PLACE?

1. Discuss different ways that ideas travel from one place to another. (Examples might include music, literature, folk tales)
2. How do people react- personally, professionally, politically, technologically- when they are able to freely communicate with one another?
3. How does the newspaper help people to share ideas?
4. In what ways are people prevented from experiencing the movement of ideas? (examples include censorship, geographic barriers, language barriers)
5. What happens when people are not able to communicate?



MOVEMENT ACTIVITY # 3



LOOK AT THE LABEL

Items in the classroom can easily represent a microcosm of the world economy. You will be surprised how many countries are represented on the "Made in...." labels of products in your classroom.

If you have these items in your home, look at the labels on them and see where they are made. Write down the brand names, also. There is space for two or more items in case you and your family have more than one! If you have more than two, write the others down on the back of this sheet.

	Brand Name	Made in
Television		
Camera		
Watch		
Automobile		
Refrigerator		

Look around your house at as many labels as possible. If you find an item made in a country not yet identified in class, write it down.

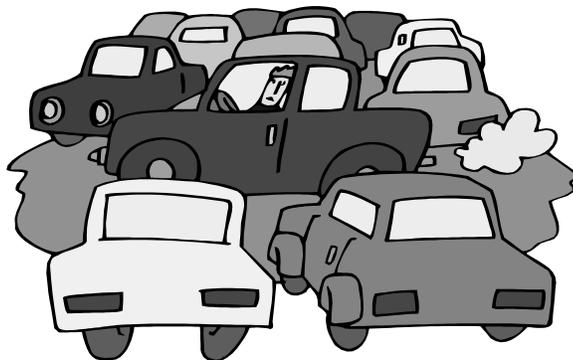
Kind of item	Brand name	Made in...

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY # 4

COMMUTING TO WORK

- Create a graph to show how far your parents commute to work each day. A different bar will represent people who commute less than 5 miles, 6 to 10 miles, and more than 30 miles. Provide a map to show the different places people travel.

- Look through the newspaper for stories about commuting woes; road construction, traffic tie-ups, or any other stories about people commuting to work. What problems do people encounter on a daily basis? What, if anything, is being done to alleviate these problems? Write a summary of a news article below or on the back.



MOVEMENT ACTIVITY # 5

ROOTS

- Where do your families come from? Find about your families' roots. Plot the information on a class chart so you can see the roots they share with others in the class.
- Discuss what you know about when and why your ancestors came to the United States and how they got here.
- Look through the newspaper for stories about recent immigrants.
 1. Where are the recent immigrants coming from?
 2. Why did they decide to come to the United States?
 3. How are the immigrants adjusting to life in a new country?



REGIONS

A basic unit of geographic study is the region, an area on the earth's surface that is defined by certain unifying characteristics. The unifying characteristics may be physical, human or cultural. In addition to studying the unifying characteristics of a region, geographers study how a region changes over time. Using the theme of regions, geographers divide the world into manageable units for study.

Regions can change over time due to changes in climate, economic conditions, accessibility of trade routes, and many other factors. Geographers study how regions change to predict the needs of the people and the effects on the environment. The theme of regions is important in terms of our learning to manage the differences and similarities which allow our world to function as a unit.



REGIONS
ACTIVITY # 1



A REGIONAL DILEMMA

Every region in the United States must deal with special problems such as the environment or homelessness. Select a region of the United States and use the local newspaper to identify regional problems. (Many newspapers have on-line editions or you could do this activity with a Target Date project)

What is a major problem in the region you are studying? Describe the problem in the box below; then fill in the other boxes with alternate solutions to the problem.

The Problem:

Alternate Solutions	Pros	Cons
1.		
2.		
3.		

The Best Solution:

REGIONS
ACTIVITY # 2

GEO POEM

Here is a way to combine what you know about a region and express it in a creative way. Using the directions below, capture the essence, the spirit, and the character of the region you have chosen to describe. Use descriptive adjectives that help paint a vivid picture of your region.

- LINE 1 CITY/ COUNTRY NAME/ REGION
- LINE 2 FOUR PHYSICAL FEATURES THAT DESCRIBE THIS PLACE
- LINE 3 THREE CULTURAL FEATURES
- LINE 4 NEIGHBOR OF/ BORDERING LOCATION
- LINE 5 CLIMATE (TEMPERATURE, PRECIPITATION) DESCRIPTION
- LINE 6 THREE ITEMS THAT GIVE THIS PLACE CHARACTER
- LINE 7 THREE EVENTS THAT SHAPED THIS PLACE
(HISTORICAL, HUMAN INTERACTION)
- LINE 8 TWO PROBLEMS OR ISSUES OF CURRENT IMPORTANCE
- LINE 9 COUNTRY/REGION NAME



REGIONS ACTIVITY #3

YOUR HOMETOWN

Use a city or town map to divide your hometown into regions (political, recreational, ethnic, commercial, etc).

1. How many regions did you identify?
2. What are the unifying characteristics that make up the regions?
3. Do students in your class live in different regions?
4. Look through the newspaper to identify any regional issues in your hometown. For example, is the commercial district facing traffic problems?
5. What local issues did you identify?
6. How are the local government and citizens dealing with these local issues?
7. What issues are shared by all the regions of your hometown?



REGIONS
ACTIVITY # 4

HISTORICAL REGIONS



Have students trace the history of regions in the United States.

1. What regions existed in 1700, 1750, 1800, 1850, 1900, and in 1950?
2. Divide students into "century groups" (for example, 1700, 1800, etc.). Which regions in each century group still exist today? Why or why not?
3. Have each group research why regional boundaries did or did not change and then present its findings to the other groups.

REGIONS
ACTIVITY # 5



READ ALL ABOUT IT

Have students share the importance of geographical regions in stories and books they are reading in class.

- Discuss how regions play an important role in storytelling and in literary analysis.
- Brainstorm a list of stories and books that are defined by the region in which they take place.
- Have students make up a story, creating a fictional region defined by the characteristics of the landscape and the people.

Title of book, story, or movie where region plays an important role	Region, country, city, location where the story is located	How does the region affect the story?	How would the story be different if it occurred in a different location?

RESOURCES

Teaching the Five Themes of *Geography* by Bonnie Dill

Mailbox Magazine: Exploring Social Studies TEC848

Mailbox Magazine: Exploring Social Studies TEC1474

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps/>

<http://geography.about.com/>

<http://www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/edgeography.htm>

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson071.shtml