Our Community

3 Studies Weekly

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Five Themes of Geography

Maps help us explore the world. When we study **geography**, we are asking questions about various people and places around the world. Questions about geography fit into five main themes.

Location: Where is something located?

Place: What is it like there?

Human-Environment Interaction: What is the relationship between people and the environment?

Movement: How and why are places connected with one another?

Region: How and why is one area similar to or different from another area?

We call these the **five themes of geography.**

Location

Human-Environment Interaction

Place

Movement

Region

NORTH AMERICA

The Five Themes

Location

The theme of **location** refers to a particular place and answers the question, "Where is something located?" We describe location in relative and absolute terms. **Relative location** tells us where something is in relation to something else. We describe where something is using relative location when we describe what is close, near, above, or below. Look at the map below. Locate the United States. What oceans are around the United States? What other countries are close to the United States? We can describe the United States' relative location using these things.

The **absolute location** of a place is its exact location. We describe where something is using absolute location when we use a coordinate grid. Look again at North America. Our national capital, Washington, D.C is located at M18.
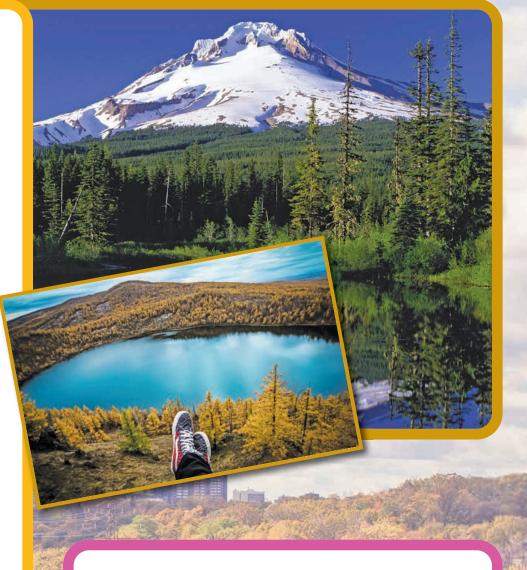
MAP OF NORTH AMERICA

ALASKA (UNITED STATES)

HAWAII (UNITED STATES)

CANADA

UNITED STATES

MEXICO

0 200 400 600 800
SCALE OF MILES

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Place

The theme of **place** refers to how we describe what a location is like. This theme includes the physical and human characteristics of a place. How is one place different from another place?

Places have different physical characteristics. The physical characteristics of a place might include forests, mountains, oceans, and rivers. The characteristics of a place are part of its natural **environment**. Landforms, bodies of water, climate, soils, biomes, natural vegetation, and animal life are all part of the natural environment of a place.

The human characteristics of a place come from human ideas and interactions people have with their environment. People make choices about where to live and how to meet their basic needs based on the physical characteristics of a place.

Human-Environment Interaction

Another theme of geography is **human-environment interaction.** This geography theme explores the relationship between people and the environment. How do people depend on, modify, and adapt to the environment?

People need food, shelter, and clothing. People depend on natural resources from the environment to meet these basic needs. People sometimes modify their environment to meet their needs. For example, people build homes, schools, and roads. People set up irrigation and farming systems. People adapt to their environment when they respond to the climate and natural resources available in different areas.

Name _____

Movement and Migration

The theme of **movement and migration** answers the question, "How and why are places connected to each other?" This theme refers to the movement of people, ideas, and materials. When we study this theme, we ask questions such as: "Why and how do people, ideas, and materials move?" "What is the result of this movement?"

Region

The final theme of geography is **region**. A region is a basic unit of geography. We define "region" as "an area with a unifying characteristic." Some regions are organized based on physical characteristics. These regions share a landform, climate, or bodies of water. Some regions are organized based on human characteristics, such as culture or economics.

Themes of Geography

This week we have reviewed the five themes of geography. Using the graphic organizer, write your definition of each theme in the middle box. In the box on the right, draw a picture to go with your definition.

Theme	Definition	Draw a Picture
Location		
Place		
Human-Environment Interaction		
Movement		
Region		