



Texas

4 Studies Weekly

OUR STATE



Regions of Texas

A **region** is an area of land that has similar characteristics. Regions are often defined by their physical characteristics. **Physical characteristics** describe the natural environment of an area. Bodies of water, including rivers, streams, lakes, and oceans, are also physical characteristics. Landforms, such as mountains, plains, valleys, and deserts, play a large part in the physical characteristics of a region. A place's physical characteristics also include biomes, climate, vegetation, and animal life.

Biomes are communities of living organisms within a region. Living organisms include animal and plant life. Many factors affect living organisms within a biome. These include climate, type of soil, water, and other growing conditions. In a biome, plants and animals depend on each other for survival.

Climate is the average weather conditions of a place over an extended period of time. While the weather can change in just a few hours, climate usually takes hundreds, thousands, and even millions of years to change. Climate includes the average temperature, precipitation, and wind in an area. Precipitation includes rain, snow, and sleet.

Physical characteristics are all connected and help geographers describe different areas on Earth's surface. They are what make Earth interesting and unique. Geographers divide Texas into four physical regions. These include the Mountains and Basins, the Great Plains, the North Central Plains, and the Coastal Plains. Each region has its own unique physical characteristics and economic activities.

Great Plains

The Great Plains region lies to the east of the Mountains and Basins region. This region extends from the panhandle of Texas to the Rio Grande. The term "panhandle" is used to describe the narrow part of a state or area of land that sticks out from the rest. The Texas panhandle is located in the northern part of the state and is bordered by Oklahoma and New Mexico. This region is an extension of the Great Plains of North America. The Great Plains are a large area of flat land that formed between the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains. They stretch from southern Canada to Texas. Geographers often divide this region into three smaller regions: the High Plains, the Edwards Plateau, and the Llano Basin.

The High Plains are an extension of the Great Plains. This area is mostly flat, with higher elevations in the east. One of the most notable landforms in this region is the Palo Duro Canyon. It is the second-largest canyon in the United States. The Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River runs through most of the canyon.

The Edwards Plateau includes much of the southern portion of the Great Plains region. This area is characterized by thin, rocky soil. It also includes natural springs, canyons, and escarpments. An **escarpment** is a long, steep slope that separates areas of land with different elevations. The Llano Basin is located where the Llano and Colorado Rivers meet. It has large deposits of minerals and precious metals, including gold, silver, copper, and tin. It is also home to multiple freshwater lakes and reservoirs

used to produce hydroelectric power.

The climate of the Great Plains differs from other regions of Texas in many ways. The summers are often hot and dry, while the winter months are the coldest of all of the state's regions. It receives an average of 22 inches of precipitation a year. This region is also prone to tornadoes. Warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico mixes with cold, dry air from the Rocky Mountains over the plains of the region to form tornadoes. Violent dust storms also occur frequently in this region.

The vegetation and animal life of the Great Plains region vary greatly from the southern parts to the northern boundaries. The High Plains are covered in short prairie grasses. The Edwards Plateau and Llano Basin regions are covered in prickly pear cacti, cedar trees, mesquite plants, and yucca. Many species of animals live throughout the region, including deer, coyotes, prairie dogs, wild turkey, mountain lions, and burrowing owls.

The main economic activities of this region include farming, ranching, and production of oil and natural gas. Farmers in this region grow various crops, including cotton, corn, and wheat. These crops grow well in the region's thin, rocky soil. Ranching is another important industry in this region. Ranchers raise sheep, goats, and cattle. The largest industry in this region is the mining and production of oil and gas. The Permian Basin is rich in oil and natural gas deposits. This region produces more oil and natural gas than any other in the state.

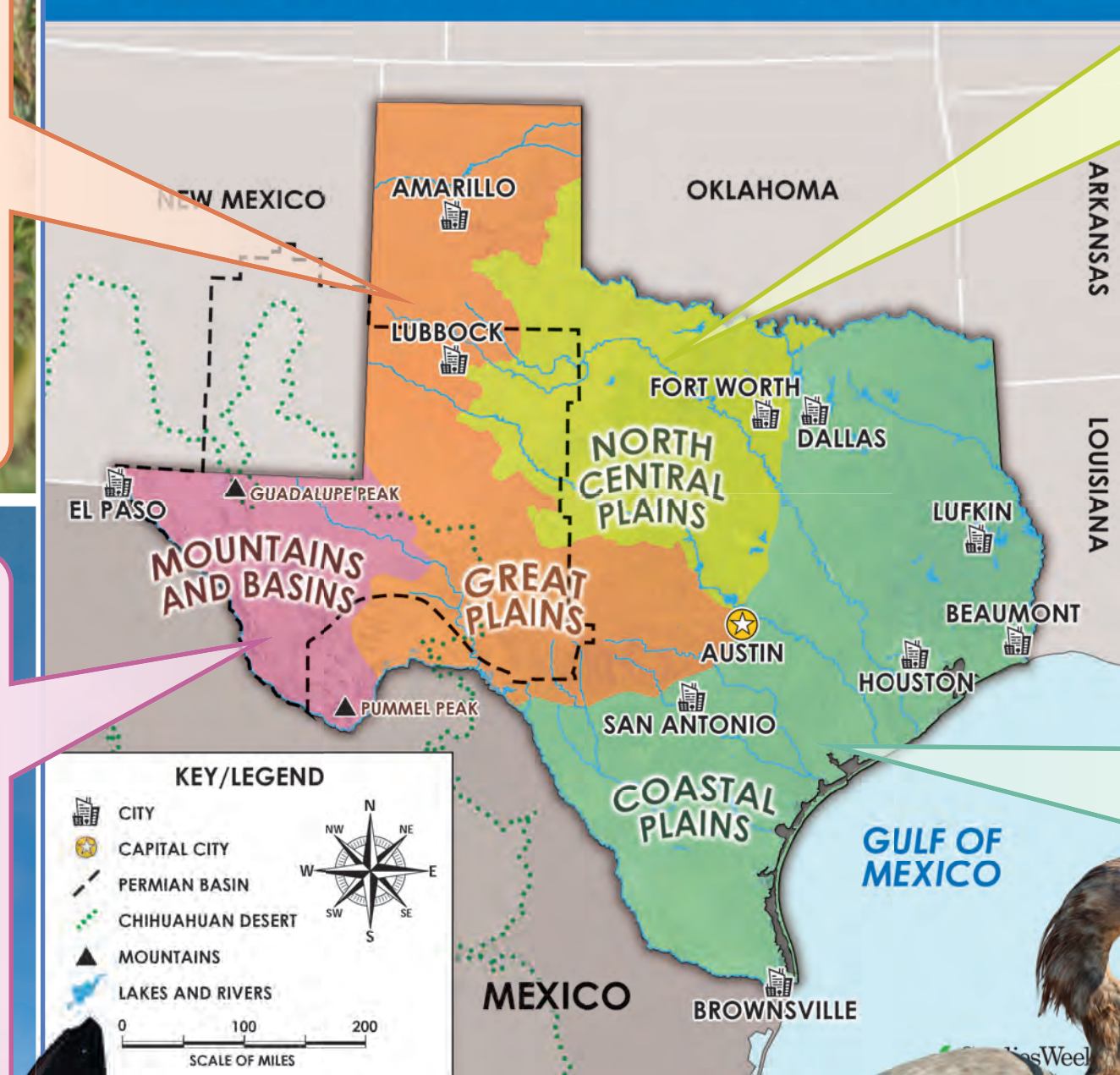


Burrowing owl



Field of bluebonnets

REGIONAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF TEXAS



Mountains and Basins

The Mountains and Basins region is the smallest physical region of Texas. This region is located in the western part of the state. It borders Mexico to the south and west and New Mexico to the north. This region is largely defined by its landforms. It is the only region in the state that includes mountains. The Guadalupe Mountains begin in New Mexico and end about 20 miles south of the Texas and New Mexico border. The tallest peak in Texas, Guadalupe Peak, is located in this mountain range, as well as the peak El Capitan. Additional mountain ranges in this region include the Davis Mountains, Hueco Mountains, Franklin Mountains, and Delaware Mountains.

The Mountain and Basins region has many landforms between its various mountain ranges. These include deserts, plateaus, basins, plains, and valleys. The Chihuahuan Desert, the largest desert in North America, covers much of the region. This region also includes important rivers. The Rio Grande river runs along the southern border of the region. The Pecos River forms the eastern border of the region and provides fresh water for much of the area.

The climate of the Mountain and Basins region varies greatly. Many of the mountain ranges receive up to 18 inches of precipitation each year. The desert and basin areas of the region can receive about nine inches of precipitation a year. Average temperatures are milder

than in other mountain and desert regions of the world. While most of this region is dry and hot, the elevated areas in some mountains are made up of cool forests.

Many types of animals and plants are found in the Mountains and Basins region. Desert plants, such as desert grasses, cacti, yucca, and agave, flourish in the dry, desert areas of the region. These areas are home to desert animals, including snakes, falcons, armadillos, foxes, and gophers. Pine trees and other plants that require more water grow at the top of the region's many mountains. Cougars, mountain goats, and black bears live in these forests.

The main industries of the Mountains and Basins region are ranching, farming, tourism, oil, and natural gas. Ranchers in this region raise cattle, sheep, and goats to send to markets throughout the state. Farmers use irrigation networks to bring fresh water to the area for their crops. Many farmers in this region grow cotton, cantaloupes, peanuts, grains, and corn.

Much of the region is part of the Permian Basin, an area rich in oil and natural gas deposits. There are over 7,000 oil and natural gas fields in the Mountains and Basin region. This plays a significant role in the state's economy. Tourism is also an important industry in the region. People visit for outdoor activities, like camping and hiking. They also enjoy tourist attractions in the city of El Paso, such as the El Paso Mission Trail and the Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site.



Oil pumps

North Central Plains

The North Central Plains region is located east of the High Plains region. It is divided into three subregions. They are the Grand Prairie, Cross Timbers, and Rolling Plains. The Grand Prairie region is mainly flat grassland with few hills. The Cross Timbers area has rich, sandy soil ideal for growing crops and timber. The Rolling Plains is the largest subregion of the North Central Plains. The landscape varies greatly between flat grasslands, deep valleys, rivers, and hilly areas.

The climate of the North Central Plains Region is different from the other regions of Texas. It is more humid than the regions to the west and receives an average of 20-30 inches of rain each year. The summer months are very hot, with average temperatures ranging from 90 to 100 degrees. Winters are milder, but seasonal storms can occur, bringing colder weather to the region. This region, like the Great Plains, is prone to violent thunderstorms and tornadoes. Flooding is also a common occurrence in communities near the region's larger rivers.

Many plant and animal species grow and live in the North Central Plains. Many types of trees grow in the Cross Timbers subregion, including cypress, mesquite, and oak trees. Bluebonnets, the state flower of Texas, and Indian paintbrush grow abundantly throughout the region. Bobcats, wild turkeys, screech owls, roadrunners, and white-tailed deer make their homes in this region.

The economy of the region is dominated by farming and ranching. The rich, sandy soil of the region makes it ideal for farming. Farmers grow many crops throughout the North Central Plains. These include pecans, cotton, corn, grains, wheat, hay, peaches, and peanuts. The Grand Prairie grasses and plains are full of cattle, sheep, and goat ranches. Many of the largest cattle ranches in the state are located in this region. Tourism and hunting are also important industries in the North Central Plains. People often come to this area to hunt white-tailed deer and wild turkeys.



Coastal Plains

The Coastal Plains region is the largest region in Texas. It covers approximately one-third of the state. It runs along the Gulf of Mexico and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. It extends 250 miles inland to the Balcones Fault and Escarpment. It is bordered by Oklahoma and Arkansas to the north and Louisiana to the east.

The landforms of this region include rivers, plains, prairies, marshes, and swamps. Geographers divide this large region into five subregions. These include the Gulf Coastal Prairies, Pine Woods Belt, Post Oak Belt, Blackland Prairie, and the South Texas Plain. Each of these subregions has its own unique physical characteristics that make them different from one another.

The Gulf Coast Prairies are located along the Gulf of Mexico. This subregion is filled with marshes, prairies, and thick grasslands. The Pine Woods Belt lies to the west of the Gulf Coastal Prairies. This area is filled with large pine forests and small hills.

The Post Oak Belt extends north of the Pine Woods Belt for 400 miles. The sandy soil in this area allows little to grow, except for oak, cedar, and some pine trees.

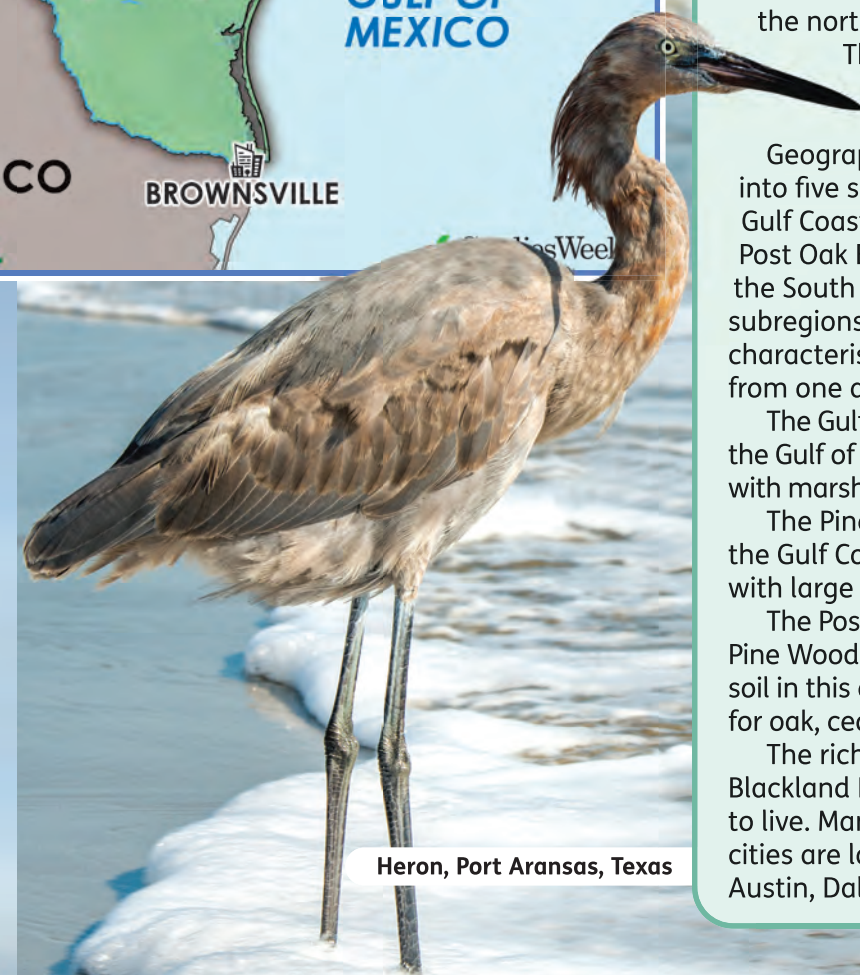
The rich soil and flat landscape of the Blackland Prairies make it an ideal place to live. Many of the state's most populous cities are located in this area, including Austin, Dallas, and Waco.

The South Texas Plains is located in the southernmost part of the state. The area is dominated by large areas of grassland. It is surrounded by important landforms, including the Rio Grande and San Antonio Rivers, the Balcones Escarpment, and the Edwards Plateau.

Many animal species live throughout the Coastal Plains. Some live in other areas of the state, such as white tail deer, bobcats, and fox. Others only live in this region because of its proximity to the coast, including river otters and alligators.

The climate of the Coastal Plains Region varies throughout the region. Some areas, like the South Texas Plains, have a hot and dry climate. Others, such as the Gulf Coastal Prairies, have a humid, wet climate. Some areas of the region receive about 25 inches of rain a year, but others can receive close to 60 inches per year. This region is also prone to tornadoes and is often struck by hurricanes that move across the Gulf of Mexico.

The main industries of the Coastal Plains are ranching, farming, and fishing. People in this region also work in the oil, poultry, manufacturing, business, and lumber industries. Tourism is another important industry in this region. Many people visit popular tourist destinations in this region each year. Some of the most popular destinations include Padre Islands National Seashore.

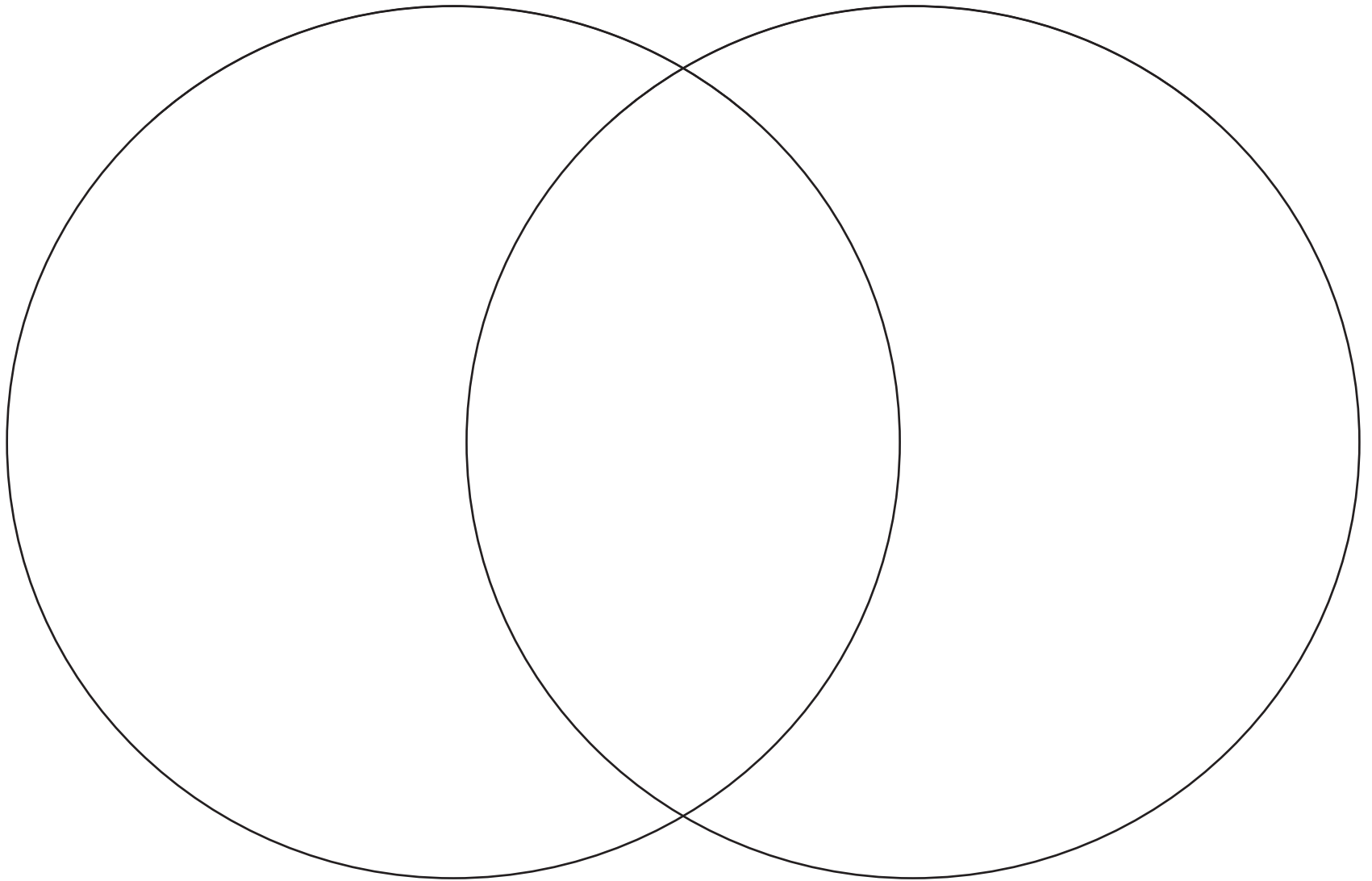


Heron, Port Aransas, Texas

Name _____

Comparing Regions of Texas

Use the Venn diagram to compare the region of Texas that you live in to a region of your choice. Describe the landforms, climate, vegetation, and economic activities of each region. Identify similarities between the two regions.



Examine the chart below and use the text to answer the following questions

Region	City	Population
Mountains and Basins	El Paso	682,669
Great Plains	Lubbock	255,885
North Central Plains	Austin	964,254
Coastal Plains	Houston	2,320,268

Texas population information from the U.S. Census

Examine the populations of the largest cities in each region. Based on the physical characteristics of each region, why do you think more people live in Houston than in Lubbock?

Why do you think more people live in El Paso than in Lubbock?

What impact does the climate of the Great Plains have on the population of Lubbock?
