

Chapter

1

Basic Concepts



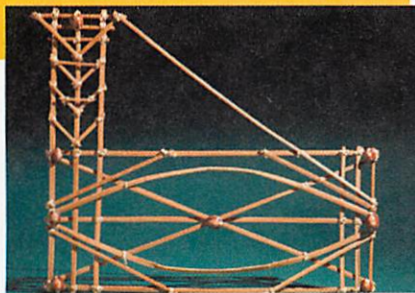
Why are these people driving around your neighborhood with a camera on their roof? Page 12



Where were your North Face clothes made? Page 21

KEY ISSUE 1

How Do Geographers Describe Where Things Are?

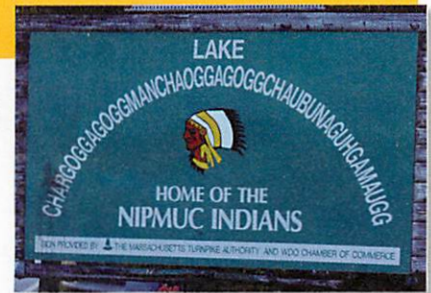


Mapping then and now p. 5

Mapmaking has come a long way, from sticks and shells to satellite mashups. Why are maps so important to geographers?

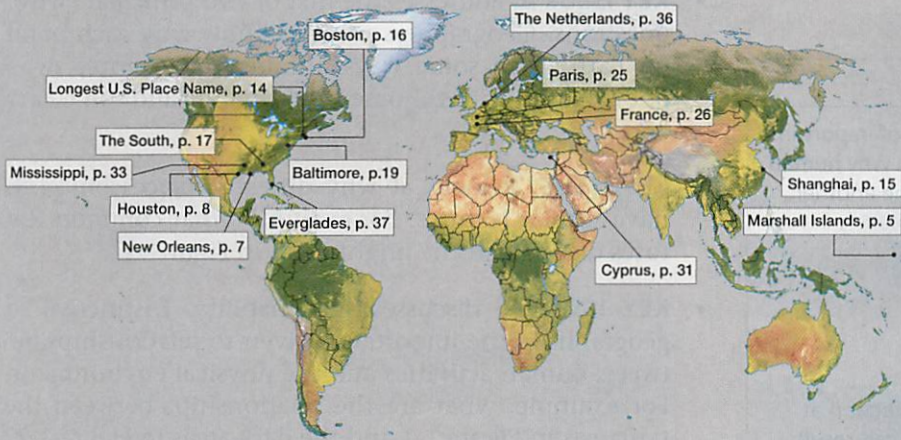
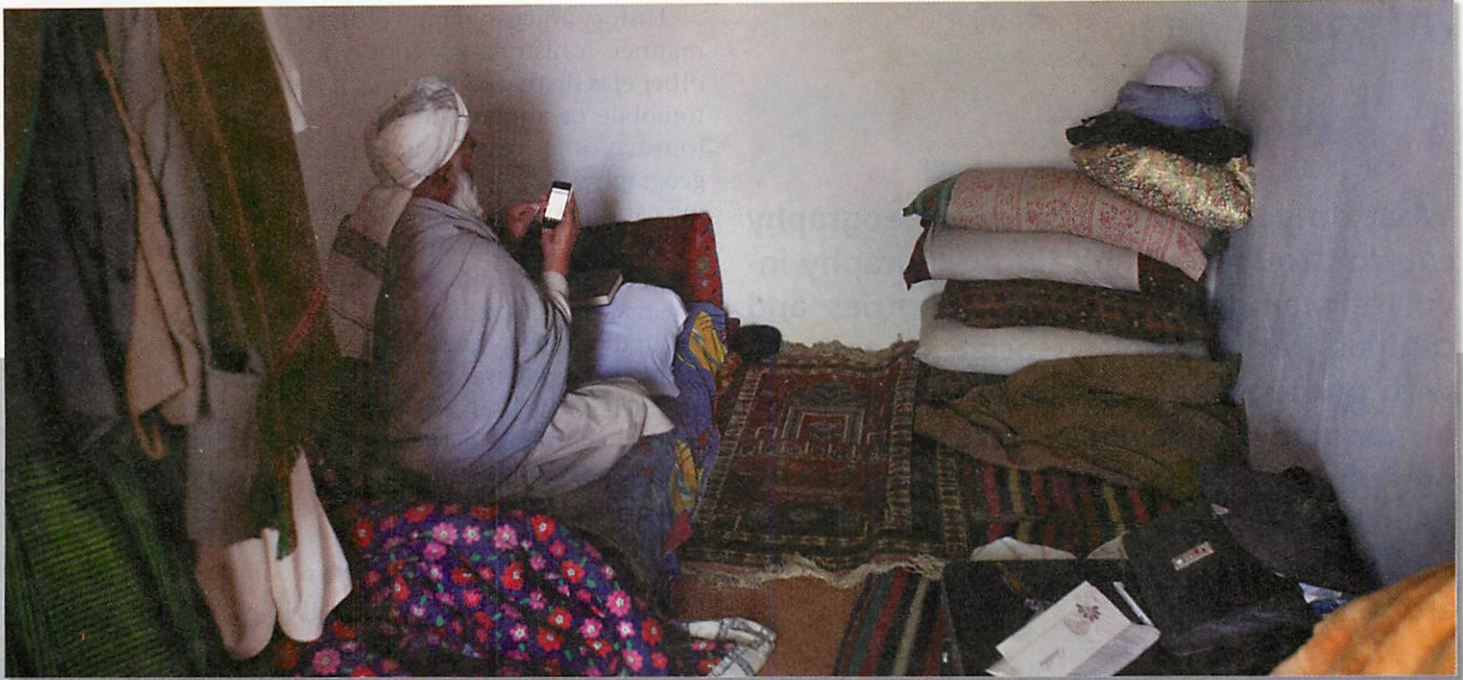
KEY ISSUE 2

Why Is Each Point On Earth Unique?



My place in the world p. 14

Where am I? The tiny spot on Earth that each of us inhabits is a special place to us—and for good reason.



▲ Geographers see people everywhere, including this Muslim cleric in Afghanistan, Twittering on his smart phone, being pulled in opposite directions by two factors—globalization and local diversity. Modern communications and technology foster globalization, pulling people into greater cultural and economic interaction with others. At the same time, people are searching for more ways to express their unique cultural traditions and economic practices.

KEY ISSUE 3

Why Are Different Places Similar?



A world of similarities and differences p. 21

We are bound together with the rest of the world—whether we like it or not. How do we fit into a global economy and society?

KEY ISSUE 4

Why Are Some Human Actions Not Sustainable?



Caring for Earth p. 31

Earth has been entrusted to us. Will we leave it in better shape than we inherited it—or in worse shape?

Introducing

Basic Concepts

What do you expect from this geography course? You may think that geography involves memorizing lists of countries and capitals. Perhaps you associate geography with photographic essays of exotic places in popular magazines. Contemporary geography is the scientific study of where people and activities are found across Earth's surface and the reasons why they are found there.

In his framework of all scientific knowledge, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) compared geography and history:

Geographers . . .	Historians . . .
identify the location of important places and explain why human activities are located beside one another.	identify the dates of important events and explain why human activities follow one another chronologically.
ask where and why.	ask when and why.
organize material spatially.	organize material chronologically.
recognize that an action at one point on Earth can result from something happening at another point, which can consequently affect conditions elsewhere.	recognize that an action at one point in time can result from past actions that can in turn affect future ones.

► **FIGURE 1-1 SATELLITE IMAGE: DAYTIME** The composite image was assembled by the Geosphere Project of Santa Monica, California. Thousands of images were recorded over a 10-month period by satellites of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. The images were then electronically assembled, much like a jigsaw puzzle.



History and geography differ in one especially important manner: A historian cannot enter a time machine to study other eras firsthand; however, a geographer can enter an automobile or airplane to study Earth's surface. This ability to reach other places lends excitement to the discipline of geography—and geographic training raises the understanding of other spaces to a level above that of casual sightseeing.

To introduce human geography, we concentrate on two main features of human behavior—culture and economy. The first half of the book explains why the most important cultural features, such as major languages, religions, and ethnicities, are arranged as they are across Earth. The second half of the book looks at the locations of the most important economic activities, including agriculture, manufacturing, and services.

This chapter introduces basic concepts that geographers employ to address their “where” and “why” questions. Many of these concepts are words commonly employed in English but given particular meaning by geographers:

- **KEY ISSUE 1** looks at geography's most important tool—mapping. Accurate maps are constructed from satellite imagery, such as Figures 1-1 and 1-2.
- **KEY ISSUE 2** addresses the first of two principal “why” questions. Geographers want to know why each point on Earth is in some ways unique. For example, why does Figure 1-2 have some bright points and some dark areas?
- **KEY ISSUE 3** looks at why different places on Earth have similar features. For example, what common features distinguish the bright areas in Figure 1-2?
- **KEY ISSUE 4** discusses sustainability. Distinctive to geography is the importance given to relationships between human activities and the physical environment. For example, what are the relationships between the tan areas in Figure 1-1 and the dark areas in Figure 1-2? This book focuses on human geography, but it doesn't forget that we also need to understand how humans interact with Earth's atmosphere, water, vegetation, and other living creatures.