

Chapter **1** Section I (pages 5–9) *Reading Study Guide*

# The Five Themes of Geography

**BEFORE YOU READ**

In this section, you will learn what geography is and about methods geographers use.

In the next section, you will read about the geographer’s tools.

**AS YOU READ**

Use this graphic to take notes about the five themes of geography.

<i>5 Themes</i>

**PLACES & TERMS**

**geography** study of the distribution and interaction of physical and human features on Earth

**absolute location** the exact place where a geographic feature is found

**relative location** a place in relation to other places around it

**hemisphere** each half of the globe

**equator** the imaginary line that divides the north and south halves of the earth

**prime meridian** imaginary line that divides the east and west halves of Earth

**latitude** imaginary lines that run parallel to the equator

**longitude** imaginary lines that go around the earth over the poles

**The Geographer’s Perspective** (page 5)

*What is geography?*

The word “geography” comes from a Greek word that means, “to describe the earth.” Geographers look at the use of space on the earth and the *interactions* that take place there. They look for patterns and connections between people and the land on which they live. So **geography** is the study of the *distribution* and interaction of physical and human features on earth.

Geographers use many methods to study the use of space on earth. The most common one is a map. Maps are representations of portions of the earth.

Geographers also use photographs to gain visual evidence about a place. They organize information into charts, graphs, or tables. This helps them to learn about geographic patterns and to understand changes over time.

Another basic tool used by geographers is the five themes of geography. These themes organize information about geography into five categories.

**1. What are some of the tools and methods used by geographers?**

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**Theme: Location** (page 6)

*How is location described?*

Geographers describe location in two ways. **Absolute location** is the exact place where a geographic feature is found. **Relative location** describes a place in relation to other places around it.

To describe absolute location, geographers use a grid system of imaginary lines. Earth is divided into two equal halves, and each half is called a **hemisphere**.

The **equator** is the imaginary line that divides the north and south halves. The **prime meridian** is the imaginary line that divides the earth east and west.

To locate places north and south, geographers use **latitude** lines, imaginary lines that run parallel to the equator. **Longitude** lines are imaginary lines that go around the earth over the poles. Each site on earth can have only one absolute location.

## 2. What are longitude and latitude?

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### Theme: Place (page 7)

#### *What defines place?*

Place includes the physical features and cultural landscape of a location. All locations on earth have physical features that set them apart. Some examples are climate, landforms, and vegetation.

Other features are products of humans interacting with the environment. Building roads or houses are interactions with the environment. Other interactions are the result of human contact. Because a location's culture and its use of space may change over time, the description of place may also change.

## 3. Why might a description of place change?

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### Theme: Region (pages 7–8)

#### *What characteristics define a region?*

A region is an area of the earth's surface that is defined by shared characteristics. Regions usually have more than one element that unifies them. These elements may include physical, political, economic, or cultural characteristics.

A formal region is defined by a limited number of related characteristics. In this textbook, the regions are generally defined by continental area and similar cultural styles. Africa, the United States and Canada, and Latin America are examples of formal regions.

A functional region is organized around a set of interactions and connections between places. Usually a functional region is characterized by a hub. A hub is central place with many links to outlying areas. For example, a city and its suburbs would form a functional region.

A perceptual region is a region in which people *perceive* the characteristics of a region in the same way. A set of characteristics may not be precisely the same for all people.

## 4. How is a formal region different from a functional region?

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### Theme: Human-Environment Interaction (page 8)

#### *How do people relate to their environments?*

People learn to use what the environment offers them. They may change that environment to meet their needs. They also learn to live with parts of the environment that they cannot control.

People living in similar environments do not respond to them in the same way. A place with lots of sunshine may mean vacation to one person, and good farming to another.

Human beings actively work to change their environments to make them a better place. They may want changes to provide needed goods. People may drain swamps or dig irrigation ditches to improve their lives. Sometimes the changes can cause problems, such as pollution.

## 5. Why do people alter their environments?

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### Theme: Movement (page 9)

#### *How do geographers analyze movement?*

Geographers study movement by looking at three types of distance: *linear*, time, and psychological.

Linear distance means how far across the earth an idea, a person, or a product travels. Physical geography can change linear distance by forcing a route to shift because of land or water barriers. Time distance is how long it takes a person, product, or idea to travel. Now it often takes less time to travel the same linear distance because of inventions like airplanes or automobiles.

Psychological distance is a term used to describe the way people view distance. Studies show that as we become familiar with a place, we think it is closer than it actually is.

## 6. What are the three types of distance that geographers use?

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