

Name _____

Date _____



Five Themes of Geography

Engage

What do you think of when you hear the word geography?

Explore

The physical features of Earth? The seven continents and how they're divided up into countries and cities and towns? What about how humans interact with the Earth and with each other? Geography's a wide-ranging field, and there are so many questions we can ask about the planet.

Luckily, there are five basic themes of geography that can guide us as we learn about the world.

Explain

Location answers the question, where is it? Location can be absolute or relative. Absolute location is the exact position of a place on Earth, like a street address or latitude and longitude coordinates. Relative location describes a location in relation to another location. We might use distance—my house is one mile from my school—or time—my house is a 15-minute walk from my school—or direction—my house is south of my school.

The next theme is place. It answers the question, what's it like? It helps us consider what makes a place unique. We use physical characteristics to describe the natural environment of a place—landforms, bodies of water, climate, plant and animal life. We use human characteristics to describe the people who live in a place—language, religion, form of government, population density, food, and more.

Next is human-environment interaction—how humans and the environment affect one another. Humans change their behavior to adapt to their environment. We wear certain clothes and build certain types of shelter based on the climate we live in. We also depend on the environment to grow food and collect materials to make clothing or build shelter. Humans also change their environment to meet their needs. Sometimes in a positive way, like planting trees—sometimes in negative ways, like overfishing or air

pollution.

Next up: movement. It's all about how people, goods, and ideas move around the globe. The movement of people is called migration. People might move to get away from war or a natural disaster—or for job opportunities or freedom of religion or politics. Movement also refers to how products and natural resources move through trade and how ideas are shared through communication channels like the internet, TV, and writing.

The last theme is region. It's how we divide up the Earth into areas that have things in common. A region might share physical characteristics, human characteristics, or a combination of both. States, countries, and provinces are political regions; they're defined by borders created by a government. A cultural region is united by a cultural feature, like language or religion. Cultural regions can be big, like the Arab world, or small, like Chinatown in San Francisco. And one place can be part of more than one region—like how San Francisco's Chinatown is also part of the Bay Area.

Elaborate

OK, let's try this for where I live!

Location: Brooklyn, NY. Absolute location: 40.7 degrees north, 73.9 degrees west. Relative location: across the East River from Manhattan.

Place: Brooklyn's at the end of an island, surrounded by water on three sides. The most common language is English, followed by Spanish. One food a lot of people eat here is pizza, and Brooklyn's densely populated. We have four seasons, so people dress for the winter, summer, and everything in between.

Human-environment interaction: Before Dutch colonists arrived, the Canarsee, a Lenape tribe, planted corn and tobacco and fished in the area's rivers for food.

Movement: Today, thousands of people who live in Brooklyn commute into Manhattan every day for work. People from all around the world move to Brooklyn for job opportunities or to chase a dream or...play for the Nets.

Region: Brooklyn is part of New York City, which is part of New York state—those are political regions. It's also part of the Northeast, which can be considered a cultural region.

Evaluate

OK, enough about me. How would you describe the place you live using the five themes of geography?