

Name _____

Date _____

What is a Region?

“Certain Things in Common”

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. A region is defined as an area that has one or more characteristics, or features, in common. These features include climate, landforms, language, religion, natural resources and industry. Geographers group places into regions based on these shared characteristics. A region may have many of these features in common. It may be made up of places that are close together on the map and share climate, a major landform, a culture, history and language. Or, a region may be connected by only one feature.

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2. A region can be defined by an aspect of the economy. Economy is the system by which goods and services are produced, sold and bought.

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Appalachia is a region near the Appalachian Mountains, a mountain range stretching from southern New York to northern Mississippi. Appalachia is often thought of in relation to the coal mining industry. The region shares economic features as well as landforms. Historically, it's been one of the largest producers of coal and the heart of the coal mining industry in the US. Since the late 19th century, the coal mining industry has shaped the region's way of life, economy and environment. However, the Appalachian coal mining industry has been in decline in recent years due to factors like competition and the resources being used up.

3. Humans decide how they want to break up the world into regions and where one region should start and end. Even the boundaries of political regions, like states, were originally determined by humans. The boundaries of regions can span continents or be limited to one neighborhood in a city.

Because regions are human creations, their boundaries are not permanent and can change over time. Reasons for these changes include war, migration and countries' gain and loss of territory. The country of France was divided into 22 administrative regions, similar to how the United States is divided into 50 individual states. However, the French voted in 2014 to decrease the number of regions to 13, so the boundaries will change and expand.

Often, people have different ideas about where the boundaries of a region are. The Rocky Mountain region of the US sometimes includes Arizona and Nevada. Some people consider these states part of the region, and some don't. Some also leave off New Mexico! When you search for a map of a region, it's likely that the maps you find may look slightly different from one another.

4. In the video, we show maps of several different regions.

Scandinavia is a region in Northern Europe that contains the countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and sometimes Finland and Iceland and their territories.

The Mediterranean is a region made up of countries that border the Mediterranean Sea. Some of the countries in the Mediterranean are also considered part of the region of North Africa.

Western Europe is a region made up of the westernmost countries on the continent of Europe. It's often considered to be all the European countries west of Finland, Germany, Austria and Greece.

The Middle East is a region that contains countries in Western Asia, like Turkey, Iraq and Israel and Egypt.

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5. North Africa is a region at the top of the continent of Africa. It contains the Sahara Desert, the world's largest hot desert. People have different opinions about which countries make up North Africa. According to the United Nations, North Africa contains the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan and the territory of Western Sahara. In North Africa, Islam is the main religion practiced. Those who practice Islam are called Muslims. Imam is an Arabic word meaning a Muslim religious leader.

Arabic is the main language spoken in North African countries. There are many different dialects of the Arabic language. A dialect is a form of a language spoken by people in a specific region or social group. Within the larger region of North Africa, there are smaller regions where people speak different dialects of Arabic. For example, people in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and western Libya speak a different dialect than people in Egypt. And in other parts of the world where Arabic is the main language, like Iraq, even different dialects are spoken.

6. Sub-Saharan Africa is a region of the African continent located south of the Sahara Desert. It contains nearly 50 countries and no one official language. Unlike North Africa, which is known for its hot, dry desert, Sub-Saharan Africa contains savannas, or large, grassy plains, and tropical rainforests. Between the desert of North Africa and these savannas, there is a "transition zone" called the Sahel where the climate transitions, or changes.

Sub-Saharan Africa has a rich and varied musical tradition. Many African cultures don't have separate words for "music" and "dance" but instead use one word to mean both. Some common characteristics of traditional African music include polyrhythm, or two or more rhythms played at the same time, and ostinato, or a short pattern of notes that is repeated over and over.

The music of sub-Saharan Africa has had a huge influence on the creation of other musical genres around the world. This music came over to the Americas with African slaves and formed the basis for genres like blues, jazz, Dixieland and gospel. These went on to form even newer genres, like rhythm and blues, rock and roll and pop.

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