General World Cultures

Chapter 1- The 5 Themes of Geography

**geography**- a study of the Earth’s surface, focusing on descriptions of places and the people who live in them

**location**- where a place is

**latitude**- distances, measured in degrees, north and south of the equator

**longitude**- distance, measured in degrees, east and west of the prime meridian

**equator**- an imaginary line around the middle of the Earth

**prime meridian**- the line of 0 degree longitude from which east and west locations are measured

**climate**- the pattern of weather in a place over many years

**migration**- the movement of a group of people from one place to another

There are two branches of **geography**. These are physical geography and human geography. What do you think each branch studies? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* Physical geography is the study of mountains, valleys, oceans, lakes, rivers and all other physical features of the Earth.

\* Human geography is the study of the Earth and the ways that people live in different places.

Why would geographers need to travel a lot? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Geographers must measure distances and draw maps. They collect information about different places and about the people who live in these places. Geographers want to know how people relate to the world around them. They also want to know how the Earth affects the people and their ways of life.

\* How is the study of physical geography “easier” today than 50 years ago? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* Geography has five main themes. Each theme is a broad idea- a different way of looking at the Earth and its people. Can you name any of the five themes? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Location**

Every place on Earth has a location. People often describe the location of a place by referring to another place. Tell me how to get to the New Lenox Pizza Hut. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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You may have said something like “Next to the KFC” or “Across the street from Subway” or “By the railroad tracks on Vine Street”. This is called the **relative location**. In order to understand the relative location of a place, you must understand the location of the place(s) that you reference.

\* Geographers need a more specific way to describe location. They use imaginary lines on a map or globe called **latitude** and **longitude**. This is a way to give a location without mentioning any other place. This is called the **absolute location**.

\* Lines of latitude move from side to side. The **equator** runs around the middle- the widest part- of the Earth. All lines of latitude run parallel to the equator. They are measured in degrees from 0 to 90. Latitude marks how far north or south of the equator a place is. The equator is at 0 degrees. The South Pole is at 90 degrees S and the North Pole is at 90 degrees N.

\* Above and below the equator, the Earth can be divided into imaginary halves called hemispheres. The upper half is called the Northern Hemisphere, and the lower half is called the Southern Hemisphere.

\* Lines of longitude stretch from the North Pole to the South Pole. The **prime meridian** marks 0 degrees. Longitude lines are not parallel. They run like sections of an orange and come together at the poles. On the opposite side of the Earth is the from the prime meridian is another line of longitude, which marks 180 degrees. The lines in between are numbered from 0 to 179 degrees. Longitude is how far east or west of the prime meridian a place is.

**Place**

Location answers the question, “Where is it?” Place answers the question, “What do you find there?”

\* Every place has features that make it special. Is the land flat? Is it hilly? Does it have cliffs? What is the weather like? What kinds of plants and animals can be found there? These are all questions about physical features. What makes your house and/or neighborhood special? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* Natural events can help explain physical features. For example, the Colorado River formed the Grand Canyon after millions of years of its water wearing away at the rock. Understanding this event helps describe what the Grand Canyon looks like.

\* A place usually has human features, too. Knowing about people leads to understanding about a place. Questions such as “How many people live there? Who are they? What language do they speak? What customs do they follow?” are about human features.

**Interaction**

Human activities can change what a place is like. How can this be? Explain.

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People cut down trees. They may have built houses, restaurants, and factories. The human features of a place may include changes that humans have brought about.

\* These changes are caused by the interaction of people and their environment. People affect their natural surroundings and are, in turn affected by it. Geographers explore this relationship. They look for connections between how people live and where they live.

\* How would life be different if you lived in Alaska? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* How would life be different if you lived in the Sahara Desert? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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People adjust their way of life to their surroundings. In northern Alaska, where the weather is very cold, many people protect themselves from the **climate** by wearing clothes made from sealskins. In Florida, however, the stores may not sell coats or sweatshirts. If a family from Alaska moves to Florida, they would not need their warm clothes any longer. Instead, they would **adapt**, or change, to blend in with their environment.

**Movement**

Have you ever lived anyplace besides your current house? If not, where would you want to live? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Most people move several times in their lives. I have lived in 5 different homes in my life. I have been in Streator, Wilmington, Joliet, and New Lenox. My brother, on the other hand, has moved 22 times in his life! In the United States, everybody has family members or ancestors who moved from somewhere else. People have always moved from place to place. Why would people want/need to move?

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\* Geographers are interested in two kinds of movement. One type is trade. People may go to another place to do business. Trade is necessary because people rarely have everything they need in their own area. They must trade what they have in order to get what they need.

\* Trade helps to spread goods around the world. It also helps to spread ideas. While people are trading, they learn about other lands and other ways of life. Another type of movement is called **migration**. When people migrate, they move to new areas to settle. Like trade, migrations also help to spread ideas. Usually, people take their customs, beliefs, and way of life with them.

\* People have many different reasons for migrating. They may migrate to escape wars or other dangers. They may move to find religious or political freedom. Sometimes people move because they are hungry. An area might be going through a **drought**, or time of no rain. Without rain, people cannot grow enough food. Therefore, a drought can drive people into migration.

**Region**

It is hard to study the whole world at once. So geographers divide the world into regions, or areas that have shared features. There are many ways to define a region.

\* One way to define a region is by its physical features. Physical features include mountains, lakes, and valleys. We call these physical features landforms. An area with many volcanoes, for instance, could be considered a region.

Define our region by landforms. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* **Climate** is another way to define a region. Climate influences many aspects of a place. Climate controls what kinds of plants and animals can live in a region. Climate can even control the activities of people. Describe our region by climate.

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\* Regions can also be defined by human features. For example, we can group together areas where people speak the same language. We can group together areas that have the same religion. Politics can define regions, too.

\* **Economics** is another way of defining regions. Economics is everything that has to do with work and money. For example, countries where most people make their living by herding or farming could be grouped together as a region.

Complete the Geographer’s Tool Kit on pages 10 and 11.