General World Cultures

Chapter 4- An Overview of a Region

**hurricane**- a violent tropical storm

**immigrant**- a person who moves to another country to settle

**democracy**- a form of government in which people choose their own leader

**export**- to sell goods or resources to other countries; the goods sold are called exports

**mineral**- a natural resource found inside the Earth

**ore**- natural mix of rocks and soil that contains metal

**manufacturing**- the making of products

**import**- to buy goods or resources from other countries; the goods bought are called imports

**service**- a useful task that people perform to earn a living without making a product

**The Land**

\* The United States and Canada are the two largest countries in North America. They cover about 90% of the continent. The Rio Grande marks the southwestern border of the United States. The St. Lawrence River marks a part of the border between the United States of America.

\* Look at the map on page 49 of your textbook. How might heading to the far west (say, California) prove difficult for the early settlers? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* If you could see these regions from outer space, you might notice a number of major landforms. What are some you think you might be able to see? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* In the east is a flat, rolling landscape called the Coastal Plain. It stretches down the Atlantic Coast and west along the Gulf of Mexico. A little to the west of the Coastal Plain is a long strip of hills. These are called the Appalachian Mountains.

\* Then, there is a vast, flat area- the biggest landform in the region. In Canada, much of this area is a high, rocky plateau called the Canadian Shield. Farther south, where the elevation drops, the flatlands is known as the Interior Plains.

\* West of the plains, there is a broad band of mountains. The first and biggest are the Rocky Mountains. It is part of a mountain range that starts in Alaska and runs almost to Mexico. The mountain range peaks more than 10,000 feet high. That is almost 2 miles tall! Other smaller mountain chains stretch between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Coast. In the south where the mountains branch apart, the bowl-shaped land between them is called the Great Basin.

\* In the far west is the Pacific Coast Mountain Range, stretching from Alaska to California. This strip of hills and valleys is more than 2,500 miles long, yet most of it is less than 100 miles long.

**Climate**

What kind of climate do we have in Illinois? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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How about Antarctica? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* Many kinds of climates are found in the United States and Canada. Climates do not vary from day-to-day or month-to-month, even though there can be significant shifts in the weather. Climate is the general pattern of weather over a period of time.

According to http://www.city-data.com/states/Illinois-Climate.html…

*Illinois has a temperate climate, with cold, snowy winters and hot, wet summers—ideal weather for corn and hogs. The seasons are sharply differentiated: mean winter temperatures are 22°F (–6°C) in the north and 37°F (3°C) in the south; mean summer temperatures are 70°F (21°C) in the north and 77°F (25°C) in the south. The record high, 117°F (47°C), was set at East St. Louis on 14 July 1954; the record low, –36°F (–37.8°C), was registered at Congerville on 5 January 1999.*

*The average farm sees rain one day in three, for a total of 36 in (91 cm) of precipitation a year. An annual snowfall of 37 in (94 cm) is normal for northern Illinois, decreasing to 24 in (61 cm) or less in the central and southern regions. Chicago's record 90 in (229 cm) of snow in the winter of 1978–79 created monumental transportation problems, enormous personal hardship, and even a small political upheaval when incumbent Mayor Michael Bilandic lost a primary election to Jane Byrne in February 1979 partly because of his administration's slowness in snow removal.*

*Chicago is nicknamed the "Windy City" because in the 1800s New York journalists labeled Chicagoans as "the windy citizenry out west" and called some Chicago leaders "loudmouth and windy"—not because of fierce winds. In fact, the average wind speed, 10.4 mph (16.7 km/hr), is lower than that of Boston, Honolulu, Cleveland, and 16 other major US cities. The flat plains of Illinois are favorable to tornado activity.*

\* Generally, the temperature varies from hot in the south to cold in the north. Along most of the U.S. West Coast, the weather is mild. The Rocky Mountain area is cold by winter. In the Central Plains, seasons can vary by as much as 150 degrees.

How can mountains impact the weather? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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\* Most parts of the Unites States and Canada are moist. The Pacific Northwest gets fog and drizzle more than half of the year. When there is a shortage of rain, it is called a drought. The Atlantic and Gulf coasts get violent, tropical storms called **hurricanes**.

\* Five of the world’s largest lakes, the Great Lakes, lie on the border between the United States and Canada. One of the world’s longest rivers, the Mississippi, runs through the Great Plains. Here are some neat facts about the “Mighty Mississippi”.

<http://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm>

The region does have some dry parts. The Southwestern United States is the driest.

**The People**

\* Almost everyone in this cultural region speaks English, although other languages are spoken in some areas. In Illinois, for example, there are many Polish speaking citizens, as well as Spanish speaking citizens. Most children go to a public school, although there are private schools as well. Parents can even choose to homeschool their children. Private citizens or companies run most businesses. People are free to practice many faiths.

\* There is a reason for all this cultural diversity. Everyone in this region is descended from **immigrants**. They have roots in some other part of the world. About 80% have roots in Europe. About 20% trace their ancestry back in Africa, Asia, and other places. The Native Americans also migrated to this land. They came from Asia long ago.

\* Both Canada and the United States have **democracy** as their form of government. The United States is divided into 50 states. See how many you can name in 2 min.

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Alaska and Hawaii are the only two states not connected to the other 48. Alaska is farther north. Part of Canada separates it from the “lower 48” states. Hawaii is a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean.

\* The United States also has several territories, including Puerto Rico. Territories have their own governments, but the people who live there are citizens of the United States. Canada is divided into ten provinces and three large territories.

\* Both countries are very urban. About 314 million people live in the United States, while Canada has about 31 million. Three out of every four people live near cities. Most Canadians live within 120 miles of the U.S. border. Few live much farther north because the climate is so cold.

\* The United States has the world’s most powerful economy. Its wealth comes from many sources. The people work in many kinds of jobs. Canada has fewer people, but it has much the same kind of economy. Many people have their own electric lights, a fax machine, a computer, and more than one television and telephone.

How many televisions are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How many telephones are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How many computers/iPads/iPods are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not all countries have these luxuries. In fact, many find it difficult to have electricity in their huts. Recall the different home styles from a previous chapter. Many of these are not equipped to have running water, insulation, or protection from the elements.

**Farming, Ranching, and Fishing**

\* You have farmers to thank for your summers off. How do you think this may be?

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Today, most of the farmland in the United States and Canada is owned and run by companies, though some farms still belong to families. Almost all farmers in this region use machines to work the land. As a result, Canada and the United States grow more food than the citizens eat.

\* Both countries **export** wheat, which is grown in the Central Plains. Corn and other grains are also grown there. Farmers in the southern and southeastern United States earn billions of dollars from growing cotton, rice, and tobacco. California alone grows enough vegetables to feed the whole continent. The Pacific Northwest produces fruit and potatoes.

\* Both Canada and the United States have dairy farms and raise hogs, chickens, and cattle. Fishing is big business along the thousands of miles of coastline.

**Mining, Drilling, and Logging**

\* North America is rich in **minerals**. Gold is just one of them. How many other minerals can you name in two minutes? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Many other **ores** are found in this region. They are found in the western mountains, in the Canadian Shield, and near the Great Lakes. There is silver, copper, iron, and much more. Coal is found in the Appalachians. The work of getting these resources out of the Earth is called mining. Canada gets much of its wealth from mining.

\* Both Canada and the United States have reserves of oil, which has sometimes been called “black gold.” Why do you think oil is called “black gold”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Oil is crucial to life in developed countries. Factories and cars run on it, and farmers
* depend on it. Here are some other uses for oil.
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* Transportation Fuels (Gasoline, Diesel, Jet Fuel)
* Asphalt
* Military and defense
* Fertilizer
* Heating
* Feedstock
* Petrochemicals
* Plastics
* Polyurethanes
* Solvents

 Electrical generation

\* The first big North American oil fields were found in Texas and Oklahoma. Today, most of the oil pumped in this region comes out of new fields in Alaska and Oklahoma. A huge tube called the Trans-Alaska Pipeline brings the oil down the coast, where it is loaded into ships and carried south.

\* At one time, forests covered most of the lands we now call Canada and the United States. Only the Central Plains and the southwestern United States were bare. The first settlers used timber to make houses. Later, they made paper from trees.

\* Today, the forests still cover quite a bit of the United States and Canada. A lot of money is made from logging. Big companies log the southeastern United States and the Pacific Northwest. Timber is also a big business across much of northern Canada.

\* Unfortunately, trees are being cut down faster than they can grow back. Logging companies often practice clearcutting, which means they cut down every tree in a given area. Clearcutting leaves land looking bald and wipes out the animals. In a clearcut area, the soil tends to wash away and may then choke streams and kill fish.

**Manufacturing, Sales, and Service**

\* Every part of the United States and Canada has **manufacturing** businesses. These businesses make different things, depending on the raw materials found nearby. The Pacific Northwest and southeastern United States, for example, have many paper factories. That is because paper is made from trees that grow in these areas. The Gulf Coast has both oil wells and factories that make products from oil: chemicals, plastic, gasoline, and paint. The Midwest has factories that make food products. These factories get raw materials from local farms.

\* The area from the Great Lakes to the East Coast was once called the industrial belt. Coal and metal ores were mined nearby, and factories were built to make steel. Then factories were built to use all that steel. The car industry, for example, boomed in Detroit. Even now, this area is where most U.S. cars are made. (Just across the border, Canada produces cars, too.) Today, the U.S. no longer makes as much steel but **imports** most of it from abroad.

\* High-tech businesses are on the rise in the U.S. and Canada. Computer companies have sprung up near an important resource- people. Many computer scientists work and teach in universities. Some of these universities are located in Massachusetts, California, Michigan, and Texas. So today, these four areas are centers of the computer industry.

\* In the U.S. and Canada, less than 4% of the workers have jobs in agriculture. About 15% have jobs in manufacturing. So what do all the other workers do? Most of them sell things, fix things, or do things for other people. They are waiters, doctors, teachers, lawyers, bankers, actors, barbers, truck drivers, mechanics, and so on. Three out of four jobs in Canada and the U.S. today are in sales and service.

*Complete Global Issues Old-Growth Forests on page 52*