

GRADE 4, UNIT 1

North American Geography



MASTER COPIES



On this shaded relief map of North America, elevations are shown from low to high using colors from green to yellow to tan to white. Image by NASA/JPL, public domain.

Acknowledgements

This Investigating History unit was developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partnership with the following organizations and individuals:

Pilot Curriculum Authors: Educurious by NCEE

Lead Authors

Kasha Browning
Elaine Santelmann

Lead Reviewer

Sara Nachtigal

Editor

Gayle Klim

2025–26 Curriculum Revisions: Educurious by NCEE

Lead Author

Elaine Santelmann

Lead Reviewer

Kasha Browning

Editor

Danielle DeStefano

Digital Media Specialist

Angela Rosenberg

Senior Advisor

Sara Nachtigal

English Learner Consultants: English Learners Success Forum

Note: ELSF does not rate or endorse materials. See the Curriculum Guidebook for more information.

Scholar Advisor

Asheesh Kapur Siddique, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Kathryn Gabriele
Dylan Geesey-Pearce
Reuben Henriques
Rebekah Judson
Miesha Keita
Julia Lucas
Katherine Tarca

Copyright Notice



All original content in this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) and © 2026 by DESE. Third party content including, but not limited to, images, illustrations, and photographs, are subject to their own license terms.

Reference in this curriculum to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm, or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Our office is not responsible for and does not in any way guarantee the accuracy of information in other sites accessible through links herein. For more information please contact: InvestigatingHistory@mass.gov.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Unit 1, Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart

Unit EQ	How can we use geography to describe the land and people of North America?
Cluster SQ	What can maps tell us about physical geography?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 3: We used images of landforms and bodies of water to create definitions.	
Lesson 4: We used clues to create a map key of physical features on a map.	
Lesson 5: We analyzed physical maps and asked questions about them.	

Blank Word Wall Cards

Directions: These cards are designed to support students with learning key vocabulary in their home language(s). Edit this document to create as many cards as you need, then use a translation resource to translate each word and definition. Print and cut out these vocabulary cards to use on the Word Wall in the classroom. Translated cards should be paired with the English version on the Word Wall to support students with translanguageing.

Blank Word Wall Cards

vocabulary word

definition

vocabulary word

definition

vocabulary word

definition

Unit 1 Know and Wonder Chart

Unit 1 Essential Question: How can we use geography to describe the land and people of North America?

What do you already know?	What do you wonder?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Write a Definition

Directions: Observe the three photo cards. Use your observations to write a definition for your group's word.


Vocabulary word: _____

Observations to use as evidence:

Definition:

Land and Water Features Word Wall Cards

Use these templates to create cards for the Word Wall for Lesson 3. Make a copy of the template and type student definitions under the vocabulary word before printing. If needed, refer to the definitions on the [Vocabulary Definitions \(Teacher Guidance\)](#).

Word and Definition	Image
<p>basin</p> <p>definition</p>	

bay
definition



coastal plain

definition



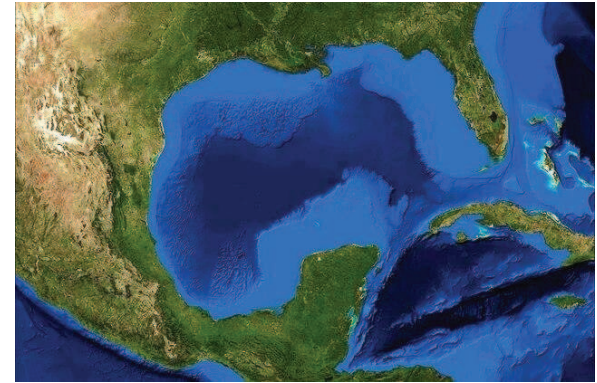
desert

definition



gulf

definition



mountain

definition



peninsula

definition



plain

definition



plateau

definition



volcano

definition



Image Sources:

- Coastal Plains by Andrea Hope via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0.
- Plains by Wing-Chi Poon via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5.
- Desert by Burley Packwood via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Gulf by NASA via Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.
- Bay by by ErgoSum88 via Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain
- Peninsula by ESA via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 igo
- Basin by NPS, Public Domain.
- Mountain by NPS, Public Domain.
- Volcano by Andiseño Estudio via Flickr, Public Domain.
- Plateau by Matt Affolter via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Physical Features Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Use the clues you find to name the bodies of water that have been identified on the map. Then, complete the key on the next page.

Bodies of Water Map



North America. Image by Mapswire via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0

Bodies of Water Map Key

A = _____

B = _____

C = _____

D = _____

E = _____

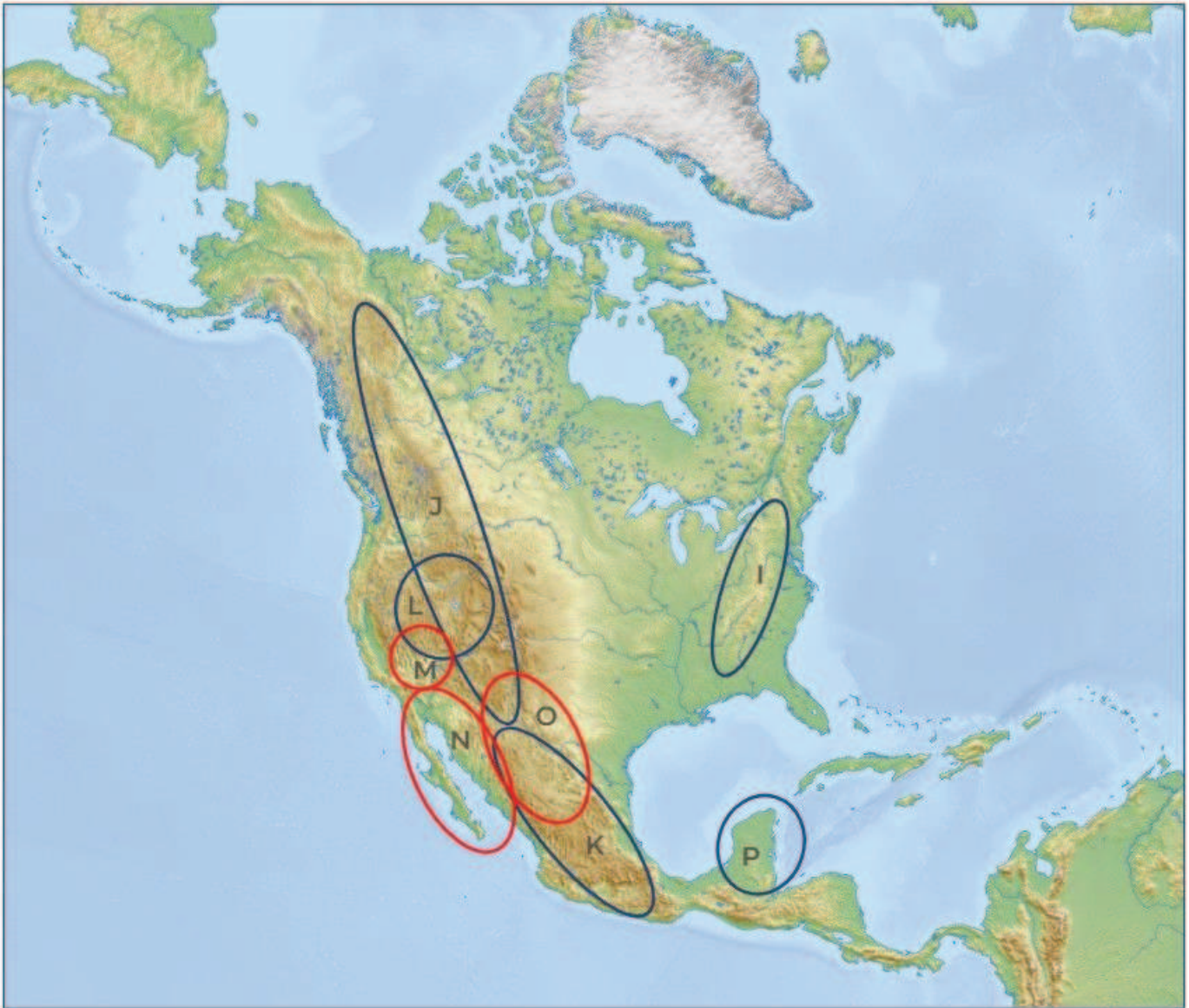
F = _____

G = _____

H = _____

Directions: Use the clues you find to name the landforms that have been identified on the map. Then, complete the key on the next page.

Landforms Map



North America. Image by Mapswire via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0

Landforms Map Key

I = _____

J = _____

K = _____

L = _____

M = _____

N = _____

O = _____

P = _____

Scavenger Hunt Clues

Bodies of Water	Clues
Mississippi River	Look for a river flowing from north to south. It starts near five large lakes and ends in a large gulf. This river flows through the middle of the United States. The sediment it carries makes good farmland along its floodplain.
Rio Grande River	This river starts in a mountain range and ends in a large gulf. Part of this river forms the boundary between the United States and Mexico.
Great Lakes	Find a group of five large lakes in the northern part of the United States. The names of these lakes, from west to east, are Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario.
Atlantic Ocean	Locate the vast body of water to the east of North America. It's the second-largest ocean on Earth.
Pacific Ocean	Search for the largest ocean on Earth, located to the west of North America.
Gulf of Mexico	This gulf is found near the southeastern part of the United States. It forms a coastline of the United States and of Mexico.
Caribbean Sea	Discover the sea that lies to the east of Mexico and to the north of South America. It has many islands that have a tropical climate.
Hudson Bay	Look for a large bay in northern Canada, near the Arctic Ocean. The mouth of the bay is narrow, unlike a gulf, which would have a larger opening to the ocean.

Landforms	Clues
Appalachian Mountains	This mountain range runs along the eastern side of North America. It is the oldest mountain range on the continent, so erosion has rounded the mountain peaks over time.
Rocky Mountains	Locate the mountain range that stretches between Canada and Mexico in the western part of the United States. This range is known for its snowy peaks and for having the highest mountains on the continent.
Sierra Madre Mountains	Search for a mountain range in Mexico that is made up of three mountain ranges. One is on each coast, and one is in the south. There are many volcanoes in this area.
The Great Basin	Discover a large, low area west of the Rocky Mountains. Rivers in this area drain into the basin instead of into the ocean like most rivers.
Mojave Desert	Find the desert located entirely within the southwestern United States. It is the smallest and driest of the North American deserts.
Sonoran Desert	This desert includes areas in the southwestern United States and a peninsula in Mexico. Even though the climate is dry, many kinds of cacti and other desert plants grow there.
Chihuahuan Desert	Search for a desert that is mostly in Mexico. Because it is trapped between two mountain ranges, it has a unique desert ecosystem.
Yucatan Peninsula	Head to southern Mexico to find a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the Atlantic Ocean. This area is famous for its limestone caves.

Scavenger Hunt Clues (Highlighted)

Bodies of Water	Clues
Mississippi River	Look for a river flowing from north to south . It starts near five large lakes and ends in a large gulf. This river flows through the middle of the United States . The sediment it carries makes good farmland along its floodplain.
Rio Grande River	This river starts in a mountain range and ends in a large gulf. Part of this river forms the boundary between the United States and Mexico .
Great Lakes	Find a group of five large lakes in the northern part of the United States. The names of these lakes, from west to east, are Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario.
Atlantic Ocean	Locate the vast body of water to the east of North America . It's the second-largest ocean on Earth.
Pacific Ocean	Search for the largest ocean on Earth, located to the west of North America .
Gulf of Mexico	This gulf is found near the southeastern part of the United States. It forms a coastline of the United States and of Mexico.
Caribbean Sea	Discover the sea that lies to the east of Mexico and to the north of South America. It has many islands that have a tropical climate.
Hudson Bay	Look for a large bay in northern Canada , near the Arctic Ocean. The mouth of the bay is narrow, unlike a gulf, which would have a larger opening to the ocean.

Landforms	Clues
Appalachian Mountains	This mountain range runs along the eastern side of North America. It is the oldest mountain range on the continent, so erosion has rounded the mountain peaks over time.
Rocky Mountains	Locate the mountain range that stretches between Canada and Mexico in the western part of the United States . This range is known for its snowy peaks and for having the highest mountains on the continent.
Sierra Madre Mountains	Search for a mountain range in Mexico that is made up of three mountain ranges. One is on each coast, and one is in the south. There are many volcanoes in this area.
The Great Basin	Discover a large, low area west of the Rocky Mountains . Rivers in this area drain into the basin instead of into the ocean like most rivers.
Mojave Desert	Find the desert located entirely within the southwestern United States . It is the smallest and driest of the North American deserts.
Sonoran Desert	This desert includes areas in the southwestern United States and a peninsula in Mexico . Even though the climate is dry, many kinds of cacti and other desert plants grow there.
Chihuahuan Desert	Search for a desert that is mostly in Mexico . Because it is trapped between two mountain ranges , it has a unique desert ecosystem.
Yucatan Peninsula	Head to southern Mexico to find a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the Atlantic Ocean . This area is famous for its limestone caves.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Analyzing Physical Maps

Directions: Complete the boxes below to analyze each map. Write Yes or No to tell whether the map has a legend and whether it has a scale. Then describe the purpose of the map. Finally, record a question that you want to ask about the map.

Map	Legend	Scale	Map Purpose	Map Question
1				
2				

Map	Legend	Scale	Map Purpose	Map Question
3				
4				
5				

Map	Legend	Scale	Map Purpose	Map Question
6				
7				
8				

Map	Legend	Scale	Map Purpose	Map Question
9				
10				

Name: _____ Date: _____

Formative Assessment

Part 1

Directions: Use the list of questions your teacher has shared and the maps in the Lesson 5 Student Slide Deck to complete Part 1.

Choose one question from the list your teacher has shared. Write the question you chose.

Look at the maps in the Lesson 5 Student Slide Deck. Identify two or more maps that will help you answer the question you chose. Which maps will you use?

Write a claim that answers the question you chose.

Give evidence to support your claim. What do you observe on the maps that helps you answer the question?

Evidence #1:

Evidence #2:

Part 2

Directions: Use your responses from Part 1 to answer the Supporting Question:

 **What can maps tell us about physical geography?**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Unit 1, Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart

Unit EQ	How can we use geography to describe the land and people of North America?
Cluster SQ	What can maps tell us about human geography?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 8: We examined political maps to identify and label boundaries such as continents, countries, states, provinces, territories, and towns.	
Lesson 9: We used resources to construct political maps of four states.	
Lesson 10: We investigated maps of the Navajo territory to find evidence that they are a nation.	

Name: _____ Date: _____

North American Political Boundaries

Directions: Use each color to mark the areas on the map as described.

- **Blue** — Trace the outline of the continent of North America.
- **Red** — Color in one state or province in Canada, one in the United States, and one in Mexico.
- **Green** — Draw a line around the countries of the Caribbean.
- **Purple** — Shade the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico.

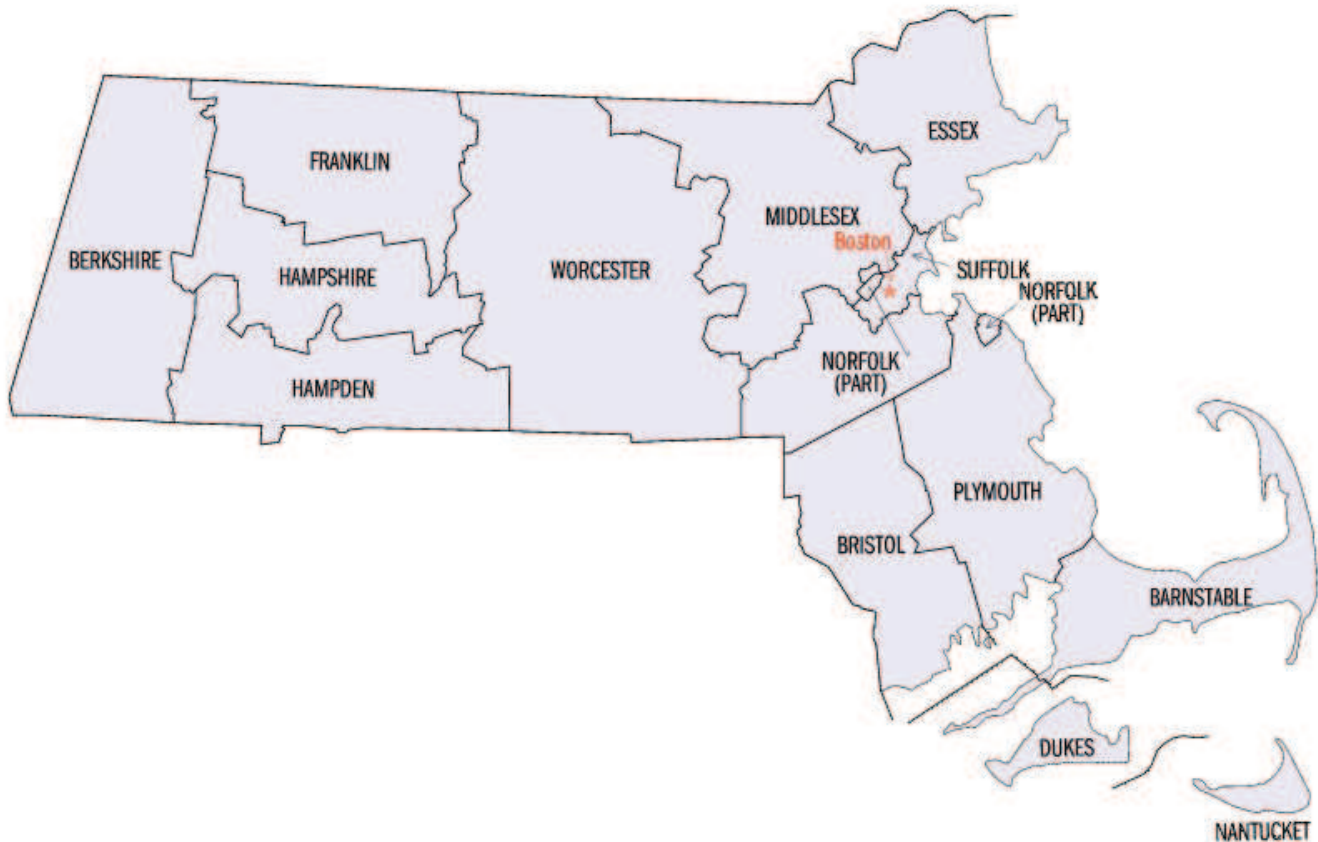


North American Environmental Atlas. Image by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Massachusetts County Map

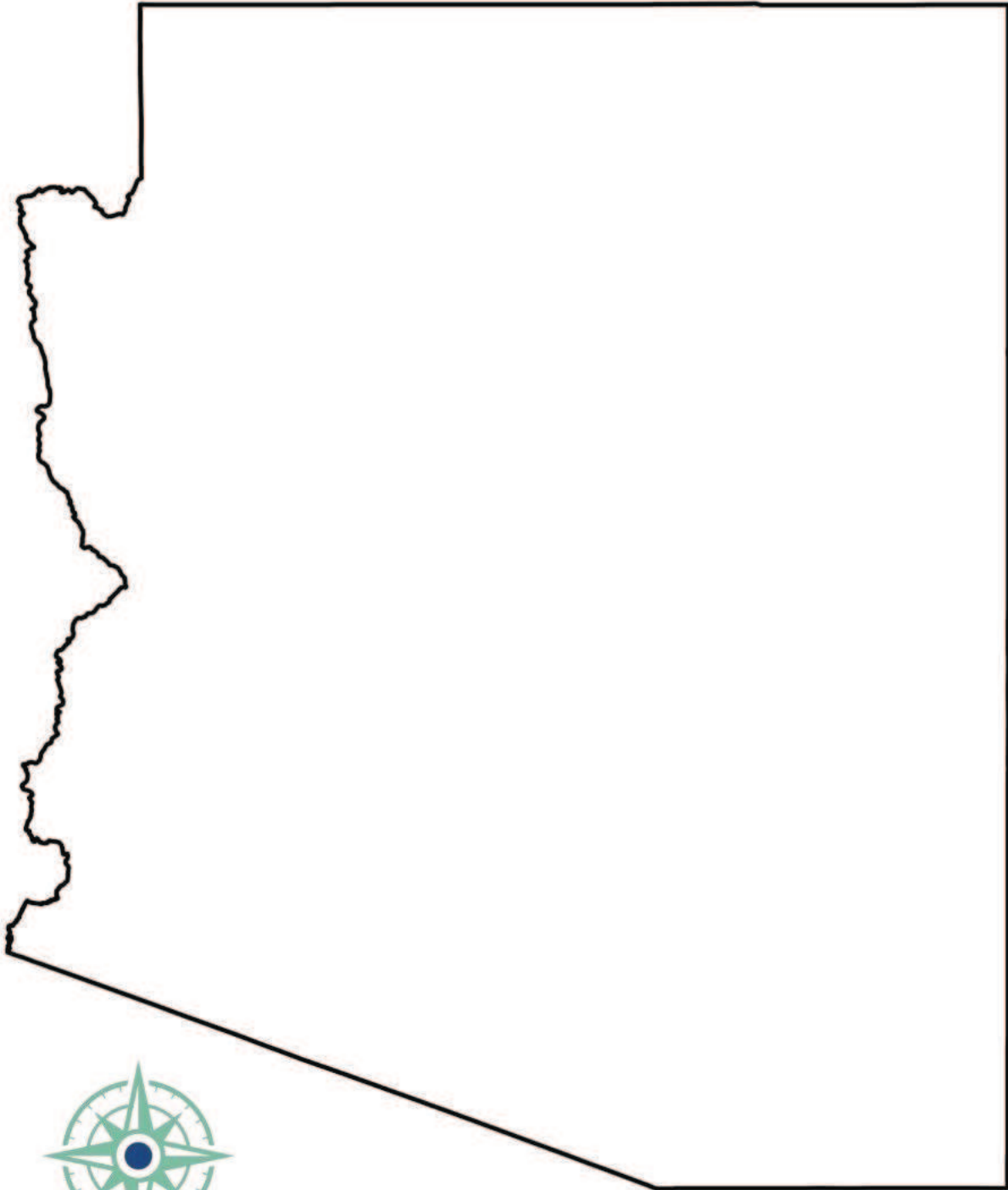
Directions: Draw a star to show the town or city where your school is located. Shade the county where your school is located.



Counties of Massachusetts. Image by AnonMoos via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Arizona State Map



Map of Arizona. Image by GIS Geography.

Directions: Using the resource set for your state, add the following features of state government to your map:

- State capital (Mark it with a star.)
- Two other large cities (Use two different colors to mark them with dots.)
- Interstate highway (Draw a line showing one highway. Label it with the highway number.)
- Campuses of the state university (Choose one color and draw a square to represent each location.)

Directions: Create a map key to show what the symbols on your map mean.

Map Key

Symbol	Meaning	Name
	state capital	
	large city	
	large city	
	interstate highway	
	state university campuses	

Directions: Discuss this question with your group, then record your answer on the lines.

What is the purpose of a political map of a state?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Georgia State Map



Map of Georgia. Image by GIS Geography.

Directions: Using the resource set for your state, add the following features of state government to your map:

- State capital (Mark it with a star.)
- Two other large cities (Use two different colors to mark them with dots.)
- Interstate highway (Draw a line showing one highway. Label it with the highway number.)
- Campuses of the state university (Choose one color and draw a square to represent each location.)

Directions: Create a map key to show what the symbols on your map mean.

Map Key

Symbol	Meaning	Name
	state capital	
	large city	
	large city	
	interstate highway	
	state university campuses	

Directions: Discuss this question with your group, then record your answer on the lines.

What is the purpose of a political map of a state?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Missouri State Map



Map of Missouri. Image by GIS Geography.

Directions: Using the resource set for your state, add the following features of state government to your map:

- State capital (Mark it with a star.)
- Two other large cities (Use two different colors to mark them with dots.)
- Interstate highway (Draw a line showing one highway. Label it with the highway number.)
- Campuses of the state university (Choose one color and draw a square to represent each location.)

Directions: Create a map key to show what the symbols on your map mean.

Map Key

Symbol	Meaning	Name
	state capital	
	large city	
	large city	
	interstate highway	
	state university campuses	

Directions: Discuss this question with your group, then record your answer on the lines.

What is the purpose of a political map of a state?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Washington State Map



Map of Washington state. Image by GIS Geography.

Directions: Using the resource set for your state, add the following features of state government to your map:

- State capital (Mark it with a star.)
- Two other large cities (Use two different colors to mark them with dots.)
- Interstate highway (Draw a line showing one highway. Label it with the highway number.)
- Campuses of the state university (Choose one color and draw a square to represent each location.)

Directions: Create a map key to show what the symbols on your map mean.

Map Key

Symbol	Meaning	Name
	state capital	
	large city	
	large city	
	interstate highway	
	state university campuses	

Directions: Discuss this question with your group, then record your answer on the lines.

What is the purpose of a political map of a state?

Discussion Sentence Starters

Directions: Use the word bank and sentence frames below to help explain the meaning of the word *state*, and to describe your state map.

Word Bank

state: a self-governing division of a country such as the United States or Mexico

government: a group of people that create and enforce laws, collect taxes, and provide services to a community

“This is a map of the state of...”

“The state capital is...”

“One highway in this state is...”

“One university in this state is...”

“The purpose of a political map is...”

Name: _____ Date: _____

Navajo Nation

What Makes the Navajo Community a Nation?

Directions:

Remember the ways that a nation governs itself:

- Elects its own leaders
- Creates its own laws
- Has courts where laws are enforced
- Provides services like police and firefighters
- Maintains roads
- Educates its children

Examine the maps from the Navajo Nation with your partner. Record the purpose of each map in the chart on the next page.

Use information on the completed chart as evidence to answer the question:
What makes the Navajo community a nation?

Map Number	Purpose and Evidence
1	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:
2	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:
3	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:
4	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:

Map Number	Purpose and Evidence
5	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:
6	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:
7	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:
8	Purpose: Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Navajo Nation (Sentence Starters)

What Makes the Navajo Community a Nation?

Directions:

Remember the ways that a nation governs itself:

- Elects its own leaders
- Creates its own laws
- Has courts where laws are enforced
- Provides services like police and firefighters
- Maintains roads
- Educates its children

Examine the maps from the Navajo Nation with your partner. Record the purpose of each map in the chart on the next page.

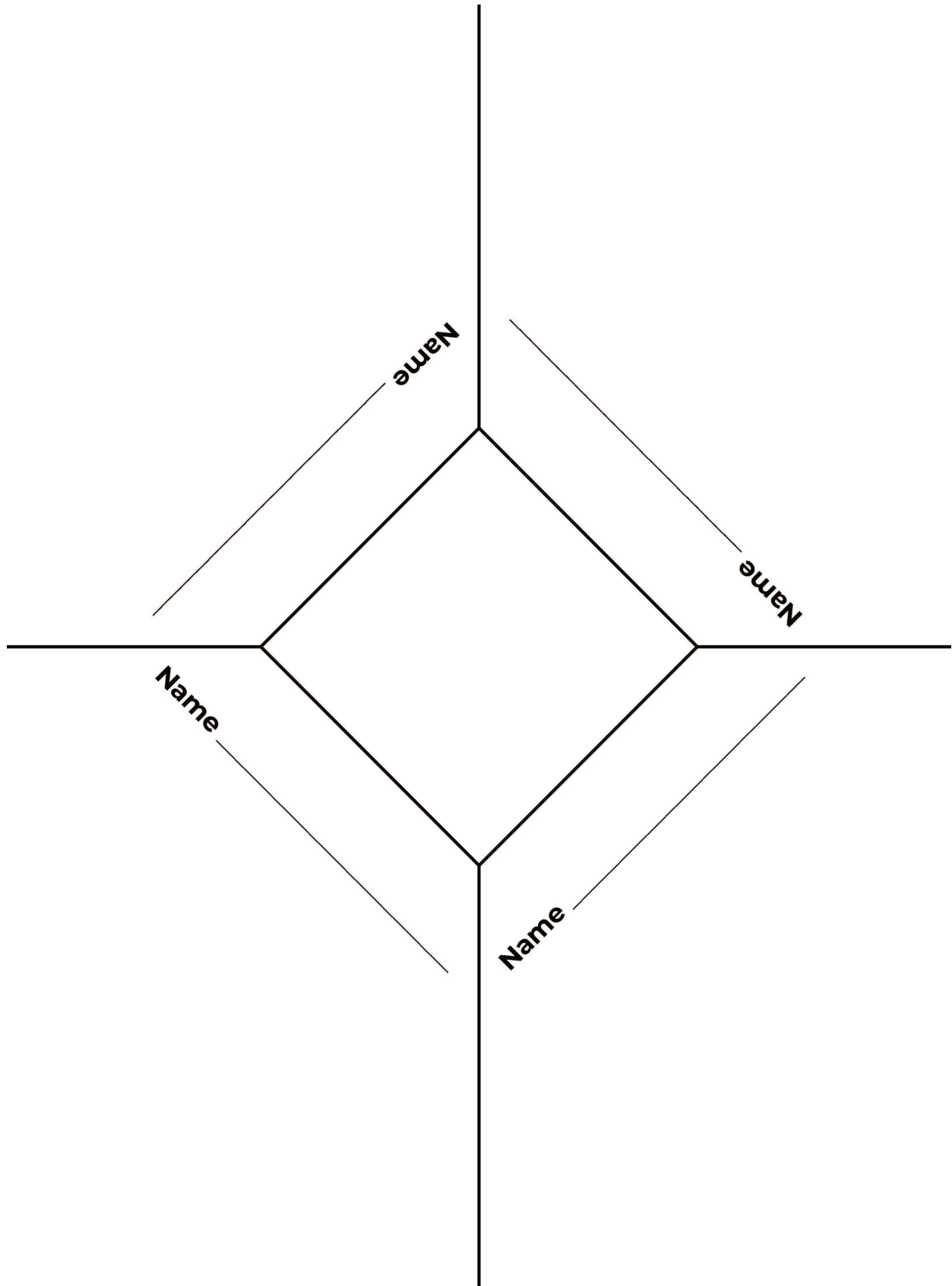
Use information on the completed chart as evidence to answer the question:
What makes the Navajo community a nation?

The Navajo community is a nation because...

Map Number	Purpose and Evidence
1	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Territory map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...
2	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Council Districts map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...
3	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Schools map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...
4	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Court Districts map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...

Map Number	Purpose and Evidence
5	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Political map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...
6	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Police Districts map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...
7	The purpose of the Navajo Nation Fire Stations map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...
8	The purpose of the Diné College Campus Locations map is to show... Evidence that shows the Navajo Nation governs itself is...

Discussion Diamond



Name: _____ Date: _____

Formative Assessment

Directions: Follow the steps below to answer the Supporting Question: *What can maps tell us about human geography?*

Step 1: Choose one of the questions from the Inquiry Chart. Write it here:

Step 2: Choose at least one map. The purpose of the map should match the focus of the question you chose. Write the title of the map here:

Step 3: Find key details from the map to use as evidence to help answer your chosen question. Write the details here:

Step 4: Use ideas from the Discussion Diamond to provide an answer to the Supporting Question: *What can maps tell us about human geography?*

Name: _____ Date: _____

Formative Assessment (Questions)

Directions: Follow the steps below to answer the Supporting Question: *What can maps tell us about human geography?*

Step 1: Choose a question and write it here.

What is the main idea of the question?

Step 2: Choose a map and write its title here.

What is the purpose of the map?

Step 3: List the key details from the map that help you answer the question.

What is your answer to the question?

Step 4: What can maps tell us about human geography? Write your group's answer from the Discussion Diamond.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Unit 1, Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart

Unit EQ	How can we use geography to describe the land and people of North America?
Cluster SQ	How can we use geography to tell others about Mexico and Canada?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 14: We took notes on an article about the geography of Mexico.	
Lesson 15: We took notes on an article about the geography of Canada.	
Lesson 16: We took notes on the physical geography of either Mexico or Canada.	
Lesson 17: We took notes on the human geography of either Mexico or Canada.	

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mexico

Fast Facts

- Official name: United Mexican States
- Form of government: republic of federated states
- Capital: Mexico City
- Population size: about 132 million people
- Official language: Spanish
- Money: Mexican peso
- Area: 758,449 square miles
- Major mountain range: Sierra Madre
- Major rivers: Rio Bravo del Norte, Yaqui

Geography



There are three important Sierra Madre mountain ranges in Mexico: Sierra Madre Occidental in the west, Sierra Madre Oriental in the east, and Sierra Madre del Sur in the south.

There are a wide variety of geographic features in Mexico. Landforms in Mexico include mountains, valleys, and canyons. There are deserts, coastal plains, and rainforests. Major waterforms in Mexico include rivers and coastlines along the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east.

Mexico has a large range of altitudes, which impacts the climate. High-altitude areas in the mountains tend to be colder and receive more rainfall. Low-altitude areas and flatlands tend to be hotter and drier.

People and Culture



Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) was a famous Mexican painter.

The Maya and other Indigenous peoples lived in Mexico first, before anyone else came. Their ancestors still live in Mexico. Spanish colonizers arrived in the 1500s and took over the area for about 300 years. Many people in Mexico today have both Indigenous and European ancestors.

Soccer and baseball are very popular sports in Mexico. Art, music, and dancing are also important parts of Mexican culture. Many people have been inspired by the paintings, sculptures, and murals created by world-famous Mexican artists.

Nature



Jaguars live in wild areas of Mexico, especially in the Yucatán Peninsula.

Due to Mexico's wide variety of geographic regions and climates, the country has a diverse mix of plant and animal life.

In deserts across Mexico, plants, such as cacti and yucca, grow. Animals in these areas include coyotes, armadillos, rabbits, and snakes.

Gray whales live in the Pacific Ocean along Mexico's western coastlines.

In Mexico's rainforests, there are tropical plants, jaguars, monkeys, and birds, including parrots and quetzals.

Government and Economy



A 50 centavos coin is equal to one half of a peso.

The government in Mexico is a federal republic. There is a mix of federal (national) and state (local) leaders and governments. The head of the federal government is the president.

Federal and state leaders make the laws and decisions in Mexico. Leaders are elected through voting.

Farming, manufacturing, and mining are key parts of the Mexican economy. Many kinds of fruits and vegetables are grown in Mexico. The country is also a major producer of cattle and hogs. Manufacturing products include cars, machinery, and clothing. Mining produces oil, natural gas, and minerals like silver.

Tourism is also a large part of the Mexican economy. People visit Mexico for its beautiful beaches, ancient ruins, and many other tourist sites.

History



This Olmec head carving dates from 1200–900 BCE.

The Indigenous peoples of Mexico, including the ancestors of the Maya, have lived in the region for thousands of years. Spanish explorers and colonizers arrived in Mexico in the early 1500s. The Spanish ruled by force and violence for hundreds of years.

Later, in the early 1800s, the people of Mexico began to successfully fight for their freedom. After 11 years of fighting, they won the Mexican War of Independence and were no longer under Spanish rule. Mexico became a republic in 1823.

Text sources:

- Britannica Kids. n.d. "[Mexico](#)."
- National Geographic Kids. n.d. "[Mexico](#)."

Image sources:

- "Map of Mexico" by Free World Maps, free for commercial use (<https://www.freeworldmaps.net/northamerica/mexico/map.html>).
- "Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird" by Frida Kahlo, public domain.
- "Jaguar" by Charles J. Sharp via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- "50 Centavos de México de 1919 (Anverso y Reverso)" by unknown author via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- "Olmec Head" by Mesoamerican via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mexico Notes Organizer

Directions: Identify key details from the “Fast Facts” section and record them in the chart below.

Fast Facts	Notes
Official Name	
Form of Government	
Capital	
Population Size	
Official Language(s)	

Directions: Choose one important idea from each section below and write it on the lines.

Geography:

People and Culture:

Nature:

Government and Economy:

History:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mexico (Chunked Text)

Fast Facts

- Official name: United Mexican States
- Form of government: republic of federated states
- Capital: Mexico City
- Population size: about 132 million people
- Official language: Spanish
- Money: Mexican peso
- Area: 758,449 square miles
- Major mountain range: Sierra Madre
- Major rivers: Rio Bravo del Norte, Yaqui

Geography



There are three important Sierra Madre mountain ranges in Mexico: Sierra Madre Occidental in the west, Sierra Madre Oriental in the east, and Sierra Madre del Sur in the south.

There are a wide variety of geographic features in Mexico. Landforms in Mexico include mountains, valleys, and canyons. There are deserts, coastal plains, and rainforests.

Major waterforms in Mexico include rivers and coastlines along the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east.

Mexico has a large range of altitudes, which impacts the climate. High-altitude areas in the mountains tend to be colder and receive more rainfall. Low-altitude areas and flatlands tend to be hotter and drier.

People and Culture



Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) was a famous Mexican painter.

The Maya and other Indigenous peoples lived in Mexico first, before anyone else came. Their ancestors still live in Mexico.

Spanish colonizers arrived in the 1500s and took over the area for about 300 years. Many people in Mexico today have both Indigenous and European ancestors.

Soccer and baseball are very popular sports in Mexico. Art, music, and dancing are also important parts of Mexican culture.

Many people have been inspired by the paintings, sculptures, and murals created by world famous Mexican artists.

Nature



Jaguars live in wild areas of Mexico, especially in the Yucatán Peninsula.

Due to Mexico's wide variety of geographic regions and climates, the country has a diverse mix of plant and animal life.

In deserts across Mexico, plants, such as cacti and yucca, grow. Animals in these areas include coyotes, armadillos, rabbits, and snakes.

Gray whales live in the Pacific Ocean along Mexico's western coastlines.

In Mexico's rainforests, there are tropical plants, jaguars, monkeys, and birds, including parrots and quetzals.

Government and Economy



A 50 centavos coin is equal to one half of a peso.

The government in Mexico is a federal republic. There is a mix of federal (national) and state (local) leaders and governments. The head of the federal government is the president.

Federal and state leaders make the laws and decisions in Mexico. Leaders are elected through voting.

Farming, manufacturing, and mining are key parts of the Mexican economy.

Many kinds of fruits and vegetables are grown in Mexico. The country is also a major producer of cattle and hogs.

Manufacturing products include cars, machinery, and clothing. Mining produces oil, natural gas, and minerals like silver.

Tourism is also a large part of the Mexican economy. People visit Mexico for its beautiful beaches, ancient ruins, and many other tourist sites.

History



This Olmec head carving dates from 1200–900 BCE.

The Indigenous peoples of Mexico, including the ancestors of the Maya, have lived in the region for thousands of years.

Spanish explorers and colonizers arrived in Mexico in the early 1500s. The Spanish ruled by force and violence for hundreds of years.

Later, in the early 1800s, the people of Mexico began to successfully fight for their freedom.

After 11 years of fighting, they won the Mexican War of Independence and were no longer under Spanish rule. Mexico became a republic in 1823.

Text sources:

- Britannica Kids. n.d. "[Mexico](#)."
- National Geographic Kids. n.d. "[Mexico](#)."

Image sources:

- "Map of Mexico" by Free World Maps, free for commercial use (<https://www.freeworldmaps.net/northamerica/mexico/map.html>).
- "Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird" by Frida Kahlo, public domain.
- "Jaguar" by Charles J. Sharp via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- "50 Centavos de México de 1919 (Anverso y Reverso)" by unknown author via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- "Olmec Head" by Mesoamerican via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Canada

Fast Facts

- Official name: Canada
- Form of government: federal parliamentary state
- Capital: Ottawa
- Population size: about 41 million people
- Official languages: English, French
- Money: Canadian dollar
- Area: 3,849,674 square miles
- Major mountain ranges: Rocky, Coast, Laurentian
- Major rivers: St. Lawrence, MacKenzie, Fraser

Geography



The Canadian Shield is a large region of ancient rock located around Hudson Bay.

Canada is the second-largest country in the world. In its vast landscape, there are many types of geographic features. The country has lakes, rivers, mountains, plains, and valleys. It has coastlines along the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

Canada extends into the Arctic, where it is so cold that many plants cannot grow. This area is covered by snow and icy glaciers. It is also home to some First Nations and Inuit peoples.

People and Culture



Haida art features a connection to nature and mythology.

Canada has a large land mass but a relatively small population. First Nations and Inuit peoples lived in Canada first, before anyone else came. Their ancestors still live in Canada, both on their ancestral lands and in major cities across the nation.

A large number of Canadians today have British or French ancestors. Colonizers from both nations settled in Canada starting in the 1600s. Today, Canadians have family roots from all around the world, including other European nations, nations in Asia, and the United States.

First Nations art is an important part of Canadian culture. Sports such as lacrosse and hockey are also very popular with Canadians. Lacrosse was originally a game created by Indigenous peoples of the Northeastern regions of North America. It is now played worldwide.

Nature



The caribou, or reindeer, live in cold areas of Canada.

In forests across Canada's different regions there are bears, moose, wolves, beavers, deer, mountain lions, and bighorn sheep. There are also many small forest animals, such as raccoons and rabbits.

Canada's lakes, rivers, and oceans have fish, otters, beavers, and seals. On the Arctic tundra, polar bears, foxes, and caribou roam. Canada's prairies and plains have mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and bison.

Like in other countries, some animal populations in Canada have been hurt by human hunting and fishing. These include wolves, lynx, and several kinds of fish. The government has parks and protected areas to try and help these animals.

Government and Economy



The heads side of a golden Canadian dollar from 2013



The tails side of a golden Canadian dollar

The Canadian one-dollar coin has the British monarch on one side and a loon on the other. People call it a “loonie.”

The government in Canada is a federal parliamentary state. The prime minister leads the government. Canada is also a constitutional monarchy. This means the king or queen of Britain is the head of state of Canada, but they do not have much power to make decisions.

The elected people of Canada’s federal government make the major decisions and laws in the country. These people include the members of parliament and the prime minister.

Since the 1500s, people in Canada have sold fish, animal furs, and other natural resources to the world. Today, farming, manufacturing, and services are all key parts of the Canadian economy. Farming includes wheat, vegetables, cattle, and hogs. Manufacturing produces cars, trucks, and metal products. Services include tourism, banking, and health care.

History



The Fortress of Louisbourg is in Nova Scotia, Canada. The fortress was built in the 1740s to protect French settlers from attacks by the British.

The Indigenous peoples of Canada, including the Inuit and First Nations peoples, have lived in the region for thousands of years. Different European explorers and colonizers landed in Canada. In about 1000 CE, Viking explorers arrived but did not settle there. Later, in the 1500s, French sailor Jacques Cartier arrived and began to claim land for France.

Later, in the 1600s, more people from France and Britain came to settle in Canada and began to fight over land. They fought four different wars over about 80 years. In the 1700s, Britain won the French and Indian War and took charge of Canada. Even so, French language and traditions are still part of daily life in many parts of Canada today.

In 1982, Canada became an independent country from Britain.

Text sources:

- Government of Canada. 2025. "[Canada's History.](#)"
- Kids Britannica. n.d. "[Canada.](#)"
- National Geographic Kids. n.d. "[Canada.](#)"

Image sources:

- "Canada Physical Map" by Free World Maps, free for commercial use (<https://www.freeworldmaps.net/northamerica/canada/map.html>).
- "Haida Carving" by Tony Hisgett via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.
- "Woodland Caribou" by Steve Forrest via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.
- "Head Side of Canadian Golden Dollar" by Coins of the Canadian dollar via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- "Tails Side of Canadian Golden Dollar" by Coins of the Canadian dollar, via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- "Days of Old" by Dennis G. Jarvis via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Canada Notes Organizer

Directions: Identify key details from the “Fast Facts” section and record them in the chart below.

Fast Facts	Notes
Official Name	
Form of Government	
Capital	
Population Size	
Official Language(s)	

Directions: Choose one important idea from each section below and write it on the lines.

Geography:

People and Culture:

Nature:

Government and Economy:

History:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Canada (Chunked Text)

Fast Facts

- Official name: Canada
- Form of government: federal parliamentary state
- Capital: Ottawa
- Population size: 41 million people
- Official languages: English, French
- Money: Canadian dollar
- Area: 3,849,674 square miles
- Major mountain ranges: Rocky, Coast, Laurentian
- Major rivers: St. Lawrence, MacKenzie, Fraser

Geography



The Canadian Shield is a large region of ancient rock located around Hudson Bay.

Canada is the second-largest country in the world. In its vast landscape, there are many types of geographic features.

The country has lakes, rivers, mountains, plains, and valleys. It has coastlines along the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

Canada extends into the Arctic, where it is so cold that many plants cannot grow. This area is covered by snow and icy glaciers. It is also home to some First Nations and Inuit peoples.

People and Culture



Haida art features a connection to nature and mythology.

Canada has a large land mass but a relatively small population. First Nations and Inuit peoples lived in Canada first, before anyone else came. Their ancestors still live in Canada, both on their ancestral lands and in major cities across the nation.

A large number of Canadians today have British or French ancestors. Colonizers from both nations settled in Canada starting in the 1600s.

Today, Canadians have family roots from all around the world, including other European nations, nations in Asia, and the United States.

First Nations art is an important part of Canadian culture.

Sports such as lacrosse and hockey are also very popular with Canadians. Lacrosse was originally a game created by Indigenous peoples of the Northeastern regions of North America. It is now played worldwide.

Nature



The caribou, or reindeer, live in cold areas of Canada.

In forests across Canada's different regions there are bears, moose, wolves, beavers, deer, mountain lions, and bighorn sheep. There are also many small forest animals, such as raccoons and rabbits.

Canada's lakes, rivers, and oceans have fish, otters, beavers, and seals.

On the Arctic tundra, polar bears, foxes, and caribou roam.

Canada's prairies and plains regions have mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and bison.

Like in other countries, some animal populations in Canada have been hurt by human hunting and fishing. These include wolves, lynx, and several kinds of fish.

The government has parks and protected areas to try and help these animals.

Government and Economy



The heads side of a golden Canadian dollar from 2013



The tails side of a golden Canadian dollar

The Canadian one-dollar coin has the British monarch on one side and a loon on the other. People call it a “loonie.”

The government in Canada is a federal parliamentary state. The prime minister leads the government.

Canada is also a constitutional monarchy. This means the king or queen of Britain is the head of state of Canada, but they do not have much power to make decisions.

The elected people of Canada’s federal government make the major decisions and laws in the country. These people include the members of parliament and the prime minister.

Since the 1500s, people in Canada have sold fish, animal furs, and other natural resources to the world. Today, farming, manufacturing, and services are all key parts of the Canadian economy.

Farming includes wheat, vegetables, cattle, and hogs. Manufacturing produces cars, trucks, and metal products. Services include tourism, banking, and health care.

History



The Fortress of Louisbourg is in Nova Scotia, Canada. The fortress was built in the 1740s to protect French settlers from attacks by the British.

The Indigenous peoples of Canada, including the Inuit and First Nations peoples, have lived in the region for thousands of years. Different European explorers and colonizers landed in Canada.

In about 1000 CE, Viking explorers arrived but did not settle there. Later, in the 1500s, French sailor Jacques Cartier arrived and began to claim land for France.

Later, in the 1600s, more people from France and Britain came to settle in Canada and began to fight over land. They fought four different wars over about 80 years.

In the 1700s, Britain won the French and Indian War and took charge of Canada. Even so, French language and traditions are still part of daily life in many parts of Canada today.

In 1982, Canada became an independent country from Britain.

Text sources:

- Government of Canada. 2025. "[Canada's History.](#)"
- Kids Britannica. n.d. "[Canada.](#)"
- National Geographic Kids. n.d. "[Canada.](#)"

Image sources:

- "Canada Physical Map" by Free World Maps, free for commercial use (<https://www.freeworldmaps.net/northamerica/canada/map.html>).
- "Haida Carving" by Tony Hisgett via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.
- "Woodland Caribou" by Steve Forrest via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.
- "Head Side of Canadian Golden Dollar" by Coins of the Canadian dollar via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- "Tails Side of Canadian Golden Dollar" by Coins of the Canadian dollar, via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- "Days of Old" by Dennis G. Jarvis via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Research Project Graphic Organizer

Before Researching

Directions: Write the name of the country you will research. Pick one open question from the Inquiry Chart about that country.

Name of Country:

Question about that country:

After Researching

Directions: Answer the question you picked from the Inquiry Chart.

If you can't answer it yet, what do you need to learn to provide a good answer?

Research

? How can we use geography to tell others about Mexico and Canada?

Directions: Find two interesting facts about physical geography and two interesting facts about human geography. Write your facts in the charts.

Physical Geography (part 1)	
Physical Features Fact 1	
Physical Features Fact 2	

Physical Geography (part 2)	
Plants and Animals Fact 1	
Plants and Animals Fact 2	

Human Geography (part 1)	
Economy Fact 1	
Economy Fact 2	

Human Geography (part 2)	
Culture Fact 1	
Culture Fact 2	

Geography of Mexico Research Guide



Plaza de la Constitución, where Mexico's government meets and works

Part 1: The Land of Mexico



Cacti in the Sonoran Desert

Part 2: The People of Mexico



Guelaguetza celebrations in Oaxaca, Mexico

Part 1: The Physical Geography of Mexico

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Mountain Ranges

Mexico is a land of many mountain ranges. The Mexican Plateau, seen here in light brown, is flat but at a high elevation. The mountains in the south of the country are volcanoes.



Map of Mexico showing the biggest mountain ranges in the country

There are three Sierra Madre mountain ranges. There is one on the west coast, one on the east coast, and one on the southwest coast of the country.

- **Eastern Mexico:** The Sierra Madre Oriental range is part of the Rocky Mountain range in the United States.
- **Western Mexico:** The Sierra Madre Occidental range is mostly formed by volcanoes. Water has eroded the rock into canyons in some places, creating incredible canyons such as Copper Canyon.
- **Southern Mexico:** The Sierra Madre del Sur mountains meet the Pacific Ocean.

Canyons in the Western Mountains

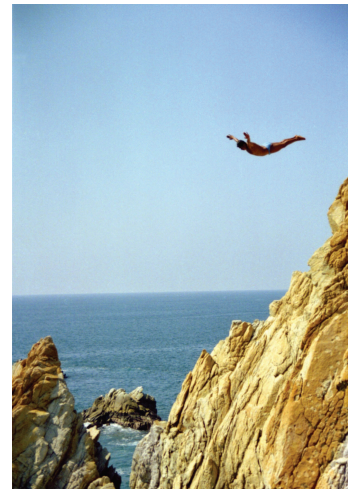
Copper Canyon was formed by rivers that cut through the mountains of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range many, many years ago.



Copper Canyon, Mexico, is bigger and deeper than the Grand Canyon.

Cliffs in the Southern Mountains

The Sierra Madre del Sur mountains end as steep cliffs at the Pacific Ocean. In cities like Acapulco, tourists enjoy watching professional cliff divers soar into the ocean below.



Cliff divers in Acapulco

Smoking Volcanoes

Volcanoes are mountains that are created from lava that has cooled and hardened. Mexico is home to 36 volcanoes. It is part of the “Ring of Fire,” a string of volcanoes around the edges of the Pacific Ocean. Nearly all of Mexico’s volcanoes are “sleeping,” or dormant.



Popocatepetl volcano erupting

Just south of Mexico City is Popocatépetl. This volcano woke up in 1994 and began spitting out lava, ash, and toxic fumes. Popocatépetl is one of the most dangerous volcanoes in the world because nearly 25 million people live in its shadow.



Map of Mexico's major volcanoes

A High, Flat Central Plateau

The Mexican Plateau is in central Mexico, between mountain ranges. The elevation is high, which makes the climate cooler than areas at a lower elevation. The central plateau gets enough rain and has good soil for growing crops. Many people live on the Mexican Plateau. Mexico City and other urban areas are located there.



Mexico City, the capital city of the country of Mexico

A Hot Desert

The northern area is mostly desert. It is hotter because the elevation is lower. The plants and animals that thrive there have adapted to the desert climate. The Chihuahuan Desert has one of the most diverse desert ecosystems in the world.



Plants in the Chihuahuan Desert

Beaches and Cenotes

The Yucatan Peninsula extends into the Gulf of Mexico. Beaches and ruins from ancient civilizations attract visitors from around the world. The land is formed on limestone, which easily dissolves in water. This can form cenotes, which are underground limestone caves with water in the bottom. Some people enjoy swimming in the cenotes.



Mayan ruins at Tulum. Mayans were the early people of Mexico who lived there before European colonization.



An underground swimming hole (cenote) in Mexico

PLANTS AND ANIMALS



The Mexican Giant Cactus is the biggest cactus species in the world.



Monarch butterflies migrate to Mexico every winter.

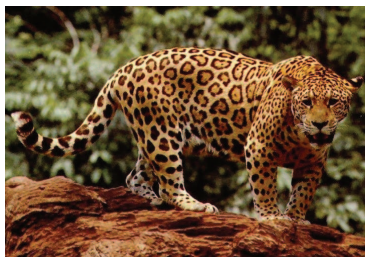
Rainforest Diversity

Rainforest ecosystems are found in the south of Mexico. Rainforests are known for their biodiversity. This means they have many kinds of plants and animals. In the rainforest, animals live at different levels—from the shady forest floor to the high treetops.

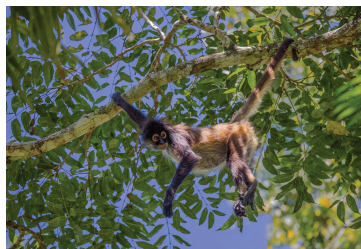
A famous bird that lives in the treetops is the resplendent quetzal. It was a sacred bird to many ancient civilizations in Mexico. Spider monkeys swing from branch to branch in the middle layers of the forest. Jaguars can climb trees but also move quietly on the forest floor. One animal that always stays on the ground is the tapir. Tapirs may look like pigs, but they are more closely related to horses. They eat twigs and the green shoots of young plants.



Resplendent Quetzal or "jewel bird"



Jaguar on a tree branch, exploring the jungle



Spider Monkey climbing a tree



The Baird's Tapir is an endangered species that lives in Mexico and other Central American countries.

Part 2: The Human Geography of Mexico

ECONOMY

Energy Production

The petroleum industry is the largest industry in Mexico. Mexico is one of the largest oil producers in the world. Petroleum products include gasoline, diesel fuel, natural gas, and jet fuel. Mexico drills for oil in the eastern part of the country. Some is underwater in the Gulf of Mexico and is drilled using oil platforms.



Oil platforms are drilling deep into the ocean, getting oil from the bottom of the sea.

Factory Workers

Mexico's second-largest industry is manufacturing (creating products in factories). The most common products manufactured in Mexico are cars and car parts, processed foods, textiles, and clothing. A *maquiladora* is a factory where materials are used to create a finished product.



Maquiladora employees at work sewing clothes

Fair Trade in North America

Trade with the United States is an important part of the economy. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) supports fair trade between the three largest countries in North America. This agreement makes sure workers in Mexico are paid fair wages.



Flags of Canada, Mexico, and the United States

Growing Food to Eat

Agriculture provides jobs for many Mexicans. The best land for growing crops is in the southern part of the Mexican Plateau. Mexico grows enough food to sell to other countries. The main exports are corn, fruits and vegetables, coffee, cotton, and sugarcane.



Farmers in a field in Puebla, Mexico, showing off their crops

CULTURE

Folk Art & Music

Folk artists make *alebrijes*, which are fantastical creatures made from paper-mâché or wood. They are hand painted in bright colors. Alebrijes are popular souvenirs for tourists. They also represent the mystery, magic, and beauty of Mexico. In Mexico City, there is a parade of giant alebrijes each October. The parade includes musicians, clowns, and people in costume.



Alebrijes on display

Mariachi bands perform a popular form of folk music. Instruments in mariachi bands include guitars, violins, and trumpets. The musicians wear *traje de charro*, the outfit of cowboys. Mariachi bands have traditionally featured men, but now women are forming their own bands too.



Mariachi band performance

Mexican Food

Many Mexican recipes include corn, rice, chili peppers, fruits, vegetables, chicken, pork, lamb, and seafood. Enchiladas, tortillas, and tacos are popular dishes. A popular sauce is called mole, which often contains chocolate!



Enchiladas served with popular side dishes

Celebrations

The Día de los Muertos is also called the Day of the Dead. It is celebrated on November 1 and 2 every year. The celebration helps people remember family members who have died.

Families create altars to honor family members who have passed. They include *papel picado*, cut paper banners with intricate designs. The day is celebrated with feasts, songs, and parades.



Day of the Dead altar

Text sources:

- [Popocatepetl Volcano Erupts in Mexico](#), National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service.
- [Mexico Volcanoes](#), Smithsonian Institution *National Museum of Natural History*.
- [Mexico](#), Kids Britannica.
- [Chihuahuan Desert Ecoregion](#), National Park Service.
- [Wildlife and Ecology](#), Embassy of Mexico, United Kingdom.
- [Resplendent Quetzal](#), Florida Museum.
- [The Baird's Tapir](#), Tapir Specialist Group.
- [Mexico Facts](#), Kids World Travel Guide.
- [Oil and Gas](#), U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration.
- [Maquiladora](#), Wikipedia.
- [Day of the Dead](#), National Geographic Kids.

Image sources:

- Plaza de la Constitución by schlaeger via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0.
- Sonoran Desert by Tomas Castelazo, via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Cuelaguetza celebrations by Apachecomx via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Map of Mexico by NASA, public domain.
- Copper Canyon by David Broad via Wikimedia Commons, , CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Acapulco Cliff Diving by Ken Eckert via Wikimedia Commons, , CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Mexico Volcano Map by Lyn Topinka, USGS via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Panoramic View of Popocatepetl Volcano in Mexico by Magaly Taboada via Pexels, CC0.
- Mexico City by Gobierno CDMX, via Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.
- Chihuahuan Desert by Ricraider via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Ruins of Tulum by TourismLandscapes via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Yucatan Cenote by Adam Baker via Flickr, CC BY 2.0.
- Mexican Giant Cactus by Antony Stanley via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA 2.0.
- Monarc Butterfly Reserve by Luis Avalos via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Resplendent quetzal by Norm Herr via Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.
- Baird's Tapir by Baird's Tapir via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Jaguar by USFWS via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Spider Monkey by Charles J. Sharp via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA-4.0.
- Oil Rig by Agência Brasil via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA-3.0.
- Maquila by Guldhammer via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Flags of NAFTA by KeepsCases via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Pueblo Farmers by Tim & Annette via Wikimedia Commons
- Alebrijes by N. Saum via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Mariachi Band by Chidodj via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Enchiladas by Jon Sullivan via Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.
- Day of the Dead Altar by Eneas de Troya via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

Geography of Canada Research Guide



Parliament Hill, where the Canadian government meets and works

Part 1: The Land of Canada



Canada has many beautiful lakes. The one pictured here is Waskesiu Lake.

Part 2: The People of Canada



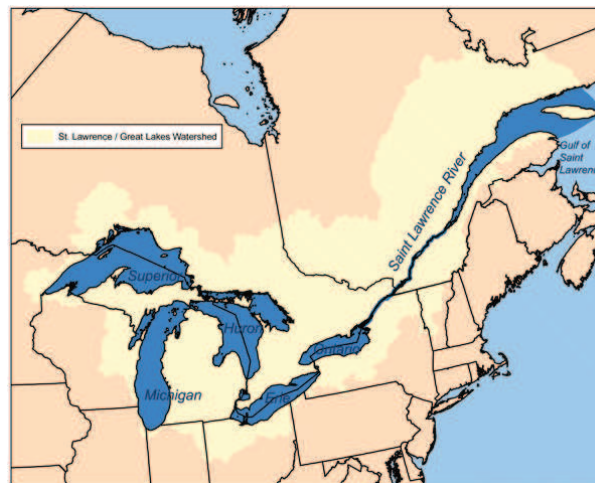
Performers in the Canada Day Parade

Part 1: The Physical Geography of Canada

PHYSICAL FEATURES

A Land of Lakes

Canada has about three million lakes, more lakes than all other countries in the world combined. The largest lake that is fully in Canada is Great Bear Lake. The largest lake in North America, Lake Superior, is partly in Canada. Lake Superior is one of the Great Lakes, most of which are on the border with the United States. The Great Lakes hold the most fresh water in the world. The St. Lawrence River connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. All of Canada's major cities and towns are located on a river or lake.



The Great Lakes watershed and St. Lawrence River connect the United States and Canada, and contain over 90% of North America's fresh water.

The largest waterfall in North America is Niagara Falls, which shares a border with the United States. It is actually a group of three waterfalls. Horseshoe Falls is the largest and is on the Canadian side.



The Horseshoe Falls of Niagara Falls straddles the border of Canada and the United States.

Lowlands, Plains, and Mountains

In the south and southeast, lowlands border the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. Much of Canada's population lives in this area. It features rolling hills with trees that lose their leaves in the fall. The land is similar to that of the northeast region of the United States.



The Canadian Rockies

Flat plains with good soil cover the middle part of the country. This area is similar to the Great Plains found in the central part of the United States.

West of the plains are the Canadian Rocky Mountains. This is part of the Rocky Mountain range that extends from Mexico into the United States and Canada. Along the Pacific Ocean are the Coast Mountains. This mountain range is known for its steep cliffs along the coastline.

In the far north, the ground is frozen all year round. This area is called the tundra. The tundra is classified as a desert due to low amounts of rainfall. The frozen ground and glaciers hold large amounts of frozen water.



Map of the Arctic tundra

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Evergreen Forests

Canada is famous for its evergreen forests. Another name for evergreen is conifer. One of the largest conifer forests in the world stretches from Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean. Evergreen trees don't lose their leaves in the winter, which makes it easier to survive in cold climates. Spruce, pine, and fir trees are all evergreen trees.

Animals such as moose, beavers, Canada lynx, black bears, and wolves live in the evergreen forest. The moose is an herbivore, meaning that it eats plants. The lynx is a carnivore. It hunts for meat.



Moose in a field of trees

The Tundra

North of the evergreen forests is the tundra, where it is too cold for trees to grow. Plants in this area have short growing seasons, which helps them survive the cold climate. These include lichens, mosses, and small shrubs. Animals that live in this cold climate include seals, polar bears, musk ox, and caribou. They have long, thick coats that are even thicker in the winter.



Seal lying down in the snow



Musk ox grazing in a field



Caribou grazing in the mountains

The Great Bear Rainforest

The Great Bear Rainforest stretches along the west coast of Canada, in a province called British Columbia.

The Great Bear Rainforest is a temperate rainforest, which has cooler temperatures than a tropical rainforest. Warm ocean currents create foggy air. The fog creates “fog drips” that fall from the trees.

Trees like red cedar, Douglas fir, and Sitka spruce thrive there. Some trees grow up to 300 feet tall and live for more than 1,500 years. The ecosystem includes gray wolves, grizzly bears, mountain goats, banana slugs, orca, salmon, sea lions, and humpback whales. The Kermode bear lives in the Great Bear Rainforest. It is all white, but it isn't a polar bear. It is related to the black bear.



The Great Bear Rainforest is the world's largest intact coastal temperate rainforest.

Part 2: The Human Geography of Canada

ECONOMY

Fair Trade in North America

Trade with the United States is an important part of Canada's economy. Canada, like the United States, is one of the world's richest countries. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) supports fair trade between the three largest countries in North America. Each country puts their own name first in the name of the agreement, so the agreement has three different names depending on where you live. This agreement makes sure that workers that trade with Canada, like those in Mexico, are paid fair wages.

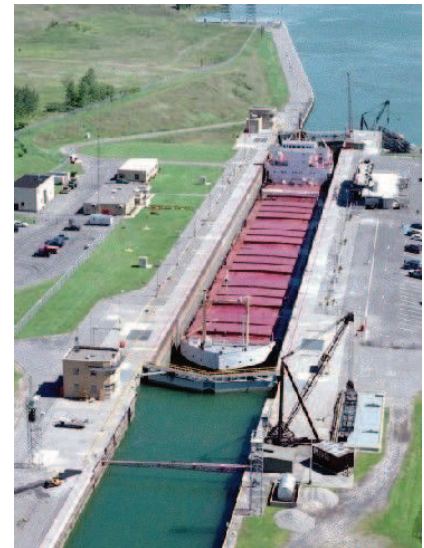


Flags of Canada, Mexico, and the United States

A Water Highway

The Great Lakes flow into the St. Lawrence River. The river connects to the Atlantic Ocean in the east. This creates a waterway across almost half of the country called the St. Lawrence Seaway. The canals that connect the Seaway were built by the United States and Canada. Both countries use it. The Seaway allows goods produced in Canada to be easily shipped to other countries. It can also bring materials into Canada.

The bodies of water on the St. Lawrence Seaway are not all at the same level. Some areas of the river had waterfalls and rapids. A series of locks were built to help large ships pass through. A lock is like a water elevator for ships. Once the ship is in the lock, gates are closed on each end. Water is pumped in or drained out. This changes the level of the ship so it can continue on its way.



Eisenhower Locks, part of the St. Lawrence Seaway that allows ships to sail from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes.

CULTURE

Sports

Sports are an important part of Canadian life. Lacrosse was originally played by Indigenous people. It is now popular across Canada.

Ice hockey is a Canadian tradition, and many of the world's best players are Canadian. It is considered Canada's national pastime. Ice hockey is played by children, men, and women of all ages.



Members of the gold medal winning Canadian men's ice hockey team at the 2010 Winter Olympics

Art

The Haida people of the western coast are known for their art and architecture. Haida art shows supernatural beings and stories about animals, birds, and fish. The figures tell a story. They also identify a group's ancestry and explore ideas. The Haida also make carved totem poles. The poles are made from big tree trunks.



Haida totemic art, showing a traditional double bird design

Music

Celtic music is popular in the province of Nova Scotia (New Scotland). It was brought to the area by Scottish and Irish immigrants. Celtic music features fiddle and piano and sometimes guitar and bagpipe. Highland dancing is popular wherever there are Scottish people. These areas include Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia. The dancers perform to the music of drums and the bagpipe.



Highland dancing is often accompanied by bagpipe music.

Food

Poutine is french fries topped with cheese curds and warm brown gravy. It is the Canadian national food. It was first eaten in rural Québec in the late 1950s.

Bannock is a flat, oval-shaped bread made from flour, water, and lard. Scottish fur traders brought the tradition to Canada and influenced the way Indigenous people made their bread-like foods.

Maple taffy is made by pouring maple syrup over snow until it hardens into a chewy candy. Maple syrup is one of Canada's biggest exports. You can make your own maple taffy during the sugaring-off season (early spring).



Poutine, a popular Canadian snack made of french fries, cheese curds, and gravy

Celebrations

The Québec Winter Carnival takes place in Québec City each year from late January to mid-February. It is the world's largest winter carnival. The province of Québec was colonized by the French. People who live there still speak French. The carnival has many outdoor sporting events. It also has snow sculptures, an ice slide, and an ice palace! The castle lord of the ice palace is Bonhomme de Neige (snowman). He wears a ceinture fléchée, a traditional French-Canadian woven sash with an arrow design.



Bonhomme de Neige, the mascot of the Québec Winter Carnival

Text sources:

- [Canada](#), Britannica Kids.
- [Canada \(for students\)](#), Britannica Kids.
- [Canada Facts for Kids](#), Kids World Travel Guide.
- [The Ancient Trees of British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest](#), World Wildlife Foundation, Natural Habitat Adventures.
- [Bannock](#), The Canadian Encyclopedia
- [Haida Arts and Technologies](#), Canadian Museum of History.
- [Dinosaur Provincial Park](#), UNESCO World Heritage Center.

Image sources:

- Parliament Hill by Wladyslaw via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Waskesiu Lake by Viktor Birkus via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- A First Nations representative carries the Union Jack by Dwayne Reilander via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Great Lakes Watershed by Kmusser via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5.
- Horseshoe Falls by Mhsheikholeslami via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Canadian Rockies by Traveler100 via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Arctic Tundra of Canada by Wikirictor via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Moose by USDA Forest Service via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Canadian lynx by Eric Kilby via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0.
- Musk ox by Quartl via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
- Caribou by Dean Biggins (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Seal by NOAA Seal Survey Via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Great Bear Rainforest by Sam Beebe via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0.
- NAFTA Flags by
- Eisenhower Locks by Maksim via Wikimedia Commons, public domain
- Alberta Oil Fields by Ymblanter via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0
- 2010 Canadian Men's Hockey Team by s.yume via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0
- Double Thunderbird by Internet Archive Book Images via Wikimedia Commons, public domain.
- Highland Dancing by Victoriaedwards via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0
- Poutine by Jonathunder via Wikimedia Commons, GNU Free
- Maple Taffy by Jaime Walker via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0
- Bonhomme de Neige by Jeangagnon via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Transition Words

Directions: Use the transition words below to connect ideas from more than one source.

Transition Words for Connecting Ideas	
Adding Information	also in addition another
Examples	for example such as
Summarizing	in conclusion overall finally

Name: _____ Date: _____

Presentation Response Form

Directions: Listen carefully to your partner’s presentation. Then respond to the prompts below.

My partner’s name is _____

One interesting thing I learned about physical or human geography from my partner’s presentation was:

One question I still have about the country in my partner’s report is:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Formative Assessment Rubric

Standard	Exceeding	Meeting	Approaching
Practice Standard 2 Generate open and closed questions relevant to multiple aspects of a topic.	The student asks an insightful open question that is connected to the physical or human geography of the country.	The student asks an open question that is connected to the physical or human geography of the country.	The student asks a closed question about the physical or human geography of the country.
Practice Standard 4 Identify the purpose of a source using an analysis of key details.	The student correctly integrates facts and details from multiple sources into categories within physical and human geography, including information from the article and population map.	The student integrates facts and details from multiple sources into categories within physical and human geography, mostly relying on information already categorized in the Research Guide.	Some facts and details from the sources are incorrectly placed into categories within physical and human geography.
Practice Standard 6 In response to an inquiry question, develop a plausible claim based on evidence found in a source.	The student makes a compelling claim based on evidence for why someone would want to visit the country they researched.	The student makes a reasonable claim based on evidence for why someone would want to visit the country they researched.	The student makes a claim that someone should want to visit the country they researched without connecting it to physical or human geography.
Content Standard 4.T1.3 Research the geography of Mexico or Canada; write and present an oral report including key geographic topics.	The slide deck demonstrates an extensive understanding of the geographic features of the country that the student researched.	The slide deck demonstrates a clear understanding of the geographic features of the country that the student researched.	The slide deck demonstrates an incomplete understanding of the geographic features of the country that the student researched.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Extension: Geography of North America Content Assessment

Section 1: Geography



Map of North America. Image by CIA World Factbook, Public Domain

Directions: This map of North America has physical features and political features. Follow the instructions below to identify 3 locations. Then, answer the map analysis questions.

1. Draw an oval around the Rocky Mountains.
2. Draw a square around the Gulf of Mexico.
3. Draw a heavy line along the border between Canada and Alaska.

Map Analysis Questions

4. Name a continent and a country on the map.

Continent: _____

Country: _____

5. What is the difference between a continent and a country?

6. Compare the physical features of Mexico and Canada. Name one way they are the same and one way they are different.

Same:

Different:

Section 2: Vocabulary

Directions: Draw a line between the vocabulary word and the matching definition.

Vocabulary word	Connection	Definition
volcano		a mostly flat landform that is higher than the land around it
plain		the system of producing, selling, and buying goods and services
economy		the knowledge, beliefs, and way of life shared by a group of people
plateau		a large area of mostly flat land
culture		a mountain with an opening where lava, ash, and gases can come out

Section 3: Short Answers

Directions: Identify whether each word in the Word Bank is from physical geography or from human geography. Write each word in the correct category in the chart below.

Word Bank			
culture	physical map	political map	continent
country	government	people	nature
economy	land	plants	animals

Kinds of Geography

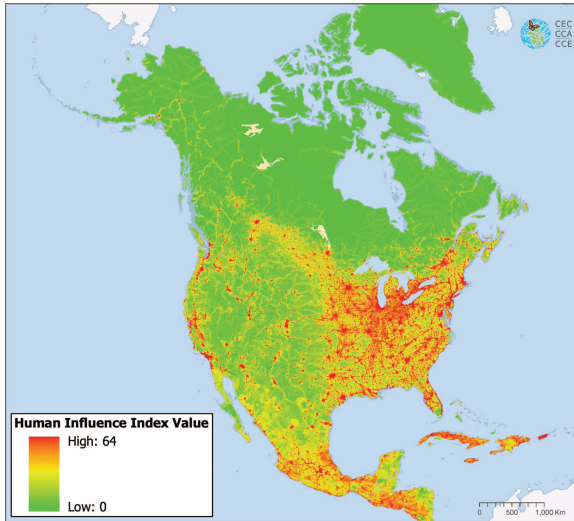
Physical Geography	Human Geography

12. Circle one type of geography. Use at least three words from the chart to answer the question.

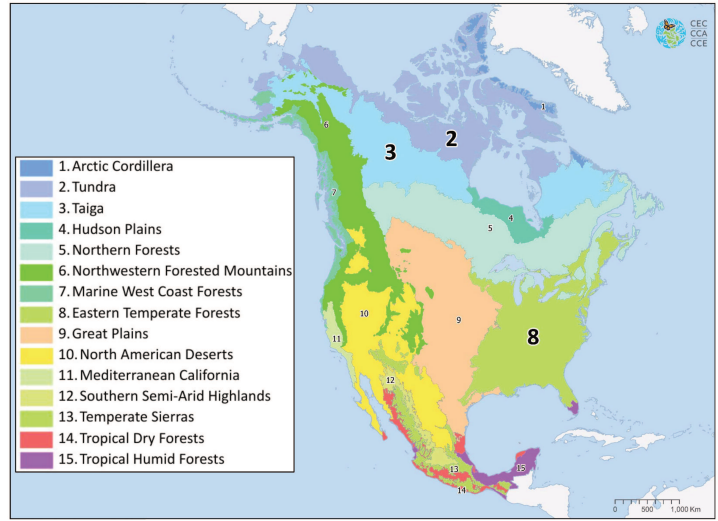
Why do people study (**physical** / **human**) geography?

Section 4: Paragraph Response

Directions: Apply what you learned about the physical and human geography of North America by comparing information from two maps and writing a paragraph to answer the question below.



Human Impact on Land Ecosystems



Land Ecosystems

What part of North America is most impacted by human activity? Name the ecosystem and explain why human impact would be a problem in that area.

Images: Human Impact on Terrestrial Ecosystems and Terrestrial Ecoregions both by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, CC BY 4.0.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Extension: Geography of North America Content Assessment (Sentence Starters)

Section 1: Geography



Map of North America. Image by CIA World Factbook, Public Domain

Directions: This map of North America has physical features and political features. Follow the instructions below to identify 3 locations. Then, answer the map analysis questions.

1. Draw an oval around the Rocky Mountains.
2. Draw a square around the Gulf of Mexico.
3. Draw a heavy line along the border between Canada and Alaska.

Map Analysis Questions

4. Name a continent and a country on the map.

Continent: _____

Country: _____

5. What is the difference between a continent and a country?

The difference between a continent and a country is...

6. Compare the physical features of Mexico and Canada. Name one way they are the same and one way they are different.

One way they are the same is...

One way they are different is...:

Section 2: Vocabulary

Directions: Draw a line between the vocabulary word and the matching definition.

Vocabulary word	Connection	Definition
volcano		a mostly flat landform that is higher than the land around it
plain		the system of producing, selling, and buying goods and services
economy		the knowledge, beliefs, and way of life shared by a group of people
plateau		a large area of mostly flat land
culture		a mountain with an opening where lava, ash, and gases can come out

Section 3: Short Answer

Directions: Identify whether each word in the Word Bank is from physical geography or from human geography. Write each word in the correct category in the chart below.

Word Bank			
culture	physical map	political map	continent
country	government	people	nature
economy	land	plants	animals

Kinds of Geography

Physical Geography	Human Geography

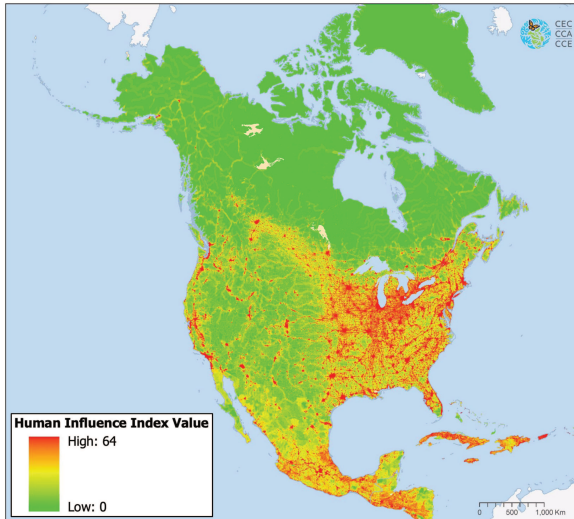
12. Circle one type of geography. Use at least three words from the chart to answer the question.

Why do people study (**physical** / **human**) geography?

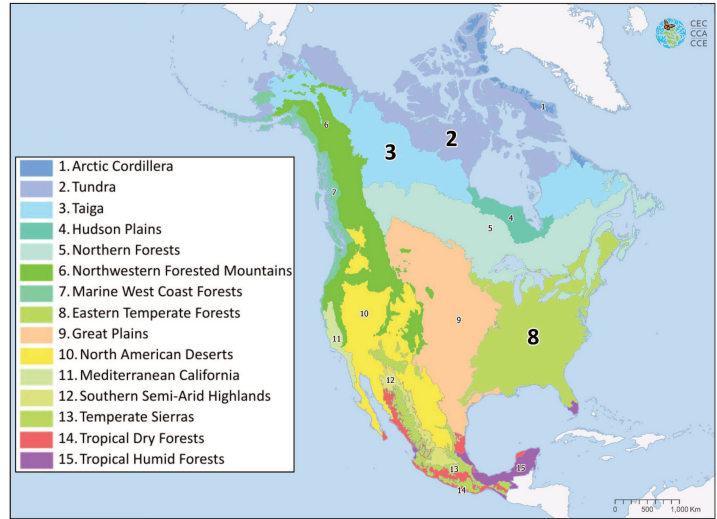
People study ____ geography to...

Section 4: Paragraph Response

Directions: Apply what you learned about the physical and human geography of North America by comparing information from two maps and writing a paragraph to answer the question below.



Human Impact on Land Ecosystems



Land Ecosystems

What part of North America is most impacted by human activity? Name the ecosystem and explain why human impact would be a problem in that area.

The part of North America that is most impacted by human activity is...

The ecosystem most impacted by human activity is...

Human impact would be a problem in that area because...

Images: Human Impact on Terrestrial Ecosystems and Terrestrial Ecoregions both by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, CC BY 4.0.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Summative Assessment

Directions: For each cluster, choose one question that you think has been important in building knowledge to answer the Essential Question:



How can we use geography to describe the land and people of North America?

Then, write your response to the question you chose. Explain what information or evidence helped you answer the question.

Question from Cluster 1: Physical Geography

Why do you think this is an important question?

How would you answer this question using what you've learned about physical geography? Name the resource that helped you answer the question.

Question from Cluster 2: Human Geography

Why do you think this is an important question?

How would you answer this question using what you've learned about human geography? Name the resource that helped you answer the question.

Question from Cluster 3: Mexico and Canada

Why do you think this is an important question?

How would you answer this question using what you've learned about Mexico and Canada? Name the resource that helped you answer the question.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Summative Assessment (Sentence Starters)

Directions: For each cluster, choose one question that you think has been important in building knowledge to answer the Essential Question:



How can we use geography to describe the land and people of North America?

Then, write your response to the question you chose. Explain what information or evidence helped you answer the question.

Question from Cluster 1: Physical Geography

Why do you think this is an important question?

This question is important because...

How would you answer this question using what you've learned about physical geography? Name the resource that helped you answer the question.

When I look at the map called __, I see that __. This helps me answer the question by...

Question from Cluster 2: Human Geography

Why do you think this is an important question?

This question is important because...

How would you answer this question using what you've learned about human geography? Name the resource that helped you answer the question.

When I look at the map called __, I see that __. This helps me answer the question by...

Question from Cluster 3: Mexico and Canada

Why do you think this is an important question?

This question is important because...

How would you answer this question using what you've learned about Mexico and Canada? Name the resource that helped you answer the question.

When I look at the map called __, I see that __. This helps me answer the question by...

Name: _____ Date: _____

Summative Assessment Rubric

Standard	Exceeding	Meeting	Approaching
Practice Standard 2 Generate open and closed questions relevant to multiple aspects of a topic.	Student identifies three questions that connect to the Essential Question and show an advanced level of critical thinking. Students have strong reasons for choosing a question and offer a complete answer.	Student identifies three questions that connect to the essential question and show a grade-appropriate level of critical thinking. Students have good reasons for choosing a question and offer a correct answer.	Student identifies three questions that loosely connect to the essential question. The questions show a beginning level of critical thinking. Students offer an incorrect or partial answer to the question.
Practice Standard 6 In response to an inquiry question, develop a plausible claim based on evidence found in a source.	The claim provides a complex answer to the question using two or more pieces of evidence from maps or other resources.	The claim accurately answers the question using one piece of evidence from a map or other resource.	The claim is not plausible based on the chosen evidence.
Content Standards 4.T1.1-3 Demonstrate knowledge of the physical and human geography of North America.	The answers to the chosen questions show a deep understanding of features of physical and human geography of North America.	The answers to the chosen questions show a clear understanding of features of physical and human geography of North America.	The answers to the chosen questions show a partial understanding of features of physical and human geography of North America.

Overall Feedback:



QUESTION



We ask questions about what we see, think, and wonder.

	Less complex ⇨	More complex ⇨	Most complex ⇨
Who?	Who was ___?	Who made ___?	Who wrote ___?
What?	What was ___?	What did ___?	What would ___?
Where?	Where was ___?	Where did ___?	Where would ___?
When?	When was ___?	When did ___?	When would ___?
Why?	Why was ___?	Why did ___?	Why would ___?
How?	How was ___?	How did ___?	How would ___?



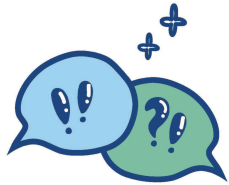
OBSERVE



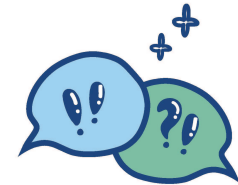
We observe a source by looking for details that help us understand it better.

Less complex ⇒	More complex ⇒	Most complex ⇒
In this source I see ___.	An important detail I see in this source is ___.	I notice ___. This is important because ___.
In this source I notice ___.	Something I notice and want to know more about is ___.	I see / don't see ___, which makes me wonder ___.

Things to look for	Source types and details	Examples
<p>Details to look for: places, people, events, geography, patterns, words, numbers, colors, map keys</p> <p>Features of sources: title, author, headings, images, captions, charts, maps, vocabulary definitions</p>	<p>Source types: article, artifact, document, drawing, graphic, illustration, image, letter, map, newspaper, photograph, primary / secondary source, video, website</p> <p>Source details: author, audience, date, title, location, materials used in an artifact, size of an artifact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this source I see <u>a ruler by the coin that shows its size</u>. I don't see <u>any people</u>, which makes me wonder <u>if the city was abandoned</u>.

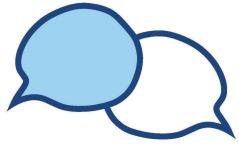


CONNECT

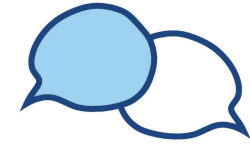


We connect to our inquiry questions by thinking about what we learn from sources.

Less complex ⇒	More complex ⇒	Most complex ⇒
I think ___.	These two sources show ___.	The evidence in this source is important because ___.
One connection is ___.	This source shows ___, but the other source shows ___.	Based on evidence that shows ___, I think ___.
This source shows ___.	These sources help answer our question about ___ because ___.	The most useful sources for answering our question are ___ and ___ because ___.
This source answers our question because ___.	This information matters because ___.	We learned ___ from these sources. This is important because ___.



TALK MOVES



We use talk moves to listen closely, share what we think, and build on the ideas of others.

Listening moves	Speaking moves
<p>Clarify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you say that another way? • Can you explain what you mean by that? • I understand ___, but I want to know ___. 	<p>Add on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to add to what ___ said. I think ___. • I agree with you and ___. • Another example is ___.
<p>Inquire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell us more about ___? • What do you think about ___? • What are some other perspectives? 	<p>Challenge ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I respectfully disagree because ___. • Why do you think that? • What is your evidence for ___?



CLAIM-EVIDENCE-REASONING



We make claims to share what we think, explain how evidence supports our ideas, and make sure our reasoning is clear.

	SENTENCE STARTERS	EXAMPLE
A CLAIM answers an inquiry question	<p>Write a statement that answers the question. Use part of the question in your answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (claim = question stem + your answer) 	<p>Question: Why do most Canadians live in the southern part of the country?</p> <p>Claim: Most Canadians live in the southern part of the country because the land is better for farming.</p>
EVIDENCE supports a claim	<p>Add facts or details from a source that support your claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quote from ___ tells us ___. • One piece of evidence from ___ is ___. • An additional piece of evidence from ___ is ___. • This idea is also supported by ___. 	<p>Evidence #1: One piece of evidence from <u>the Canada article</u> is <u>that flat plains with good soil are found in the south.</u></p> <p>Evidence #2: An additional piece of evidence from <u>the article</u> is <u>that farmers can't grow crops in the northern parts of Canada because it is too cold.</u></p>
REASONING explains how evidence supports the claim	<p>Explain how the evidence supports your claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This evidence shows ___. • This is an example of (explain the big idea) ___. 	<p>Reasoning: This evidence shows <u>most Canadians live on the warmer, flat plains in the south</u> because it is easier to <u>grow food.</u></p>

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade 4 Word Map Example

Directions: Explore this word for your personal dictionary. Follow your teacher's instructions about what sections to complete and what tools to use.

geography.
word

the study of places and the relationship between people and their environment
definition


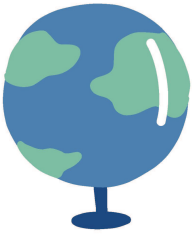

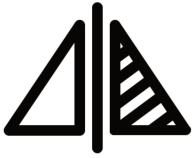

 <p>Illustrate:</p> <p>Draw a picture or diagram to help you remember the meaning of the word.</p> 	 <p>Word Family:</p> <p>Write down different forms of the word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • geography (n) • geographic (adj) • geographically (adv) • geographer (n)
 <p>Part of speech:</p> <p>Is this word a noun, a proper noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • noun 	 <p>Translanguage:</p> <p>Translate the word and write it here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • geografia

Image sources: "Sketch" by Adrien Coquet, "Puzzle pieces" by shashank singh, "Translate" by Uswa KDT, "Complement" by Brandon Shields, "Geography" by Mia Elysia, all via Noun Project, licensed under CC BY 3.0.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Word Map

Directions: Explore this word for your personal dictionary. Follow your teacher's instructions about what sections to complete and what tools to use.

word

definition



Illustrate:

Draw a picture or diagram to help you remember the meaning of the word.



Word Family:

Write down different forms of the word.



Part of speech:

Is this word a noun, a proper noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb?



Translanguage:

Translate the word and write it here

Image sources: "Sketch" by Adrien Coquet, "Puzzle pieces" by shashank singh, "Translate" by Uswa KDT, "Complement" by Brandon Shields; all via thenounproject.com, licensed under CC BY 3.0.