

## UNIT

# 1

## Geography and the Development of the United States

### KEY TERMS

Great Plains  
Central Plains  
Mississippi River  
Appalachian Mountains  
Rocky Mountains  
manifest destiny  
Sun Belt  
Great Lakes

### UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit provides a general review of the physical and cultural geography of the United States. It also reviews some of the ways in which geography has influenced the history of the country. Geographers use five themes to study an area. The five themes are location, place, movement, regions, and human-environment interaction.

These are some of the key questions relating to the nation's geography. Each question relates to one of the five geographic themes:

- Where is the United States located, both absolutely and relatively? How has the country's relative location changed over time?
- What are the physical and human characteristics of the United States?
- How have people, goods, and ideas moved between places?
- How are places within the United States similar to and different from other places?
- How have people in the United States interacted with the natural environment?

### KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

As you review this unit, take special note of the following key themes and concepts:

**Physical Systems** How have the nation's systems of mountains and waterways influenced the development of the United States?

**Immigration and Migration** What have been the major patterns of immigration and movement of people over the course of the country's history?

**Places and Regions** What different types of regions exist within the United States?



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**DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION ESSAY SCORING RUBRIC**

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**SCORE OF 5:**

- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information)
- Incorporates relevant information from *at least xxx* documents
- Incorporates substantial relevant outside information
- Richly supports the theme with many relevant facts, examples, and details
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

**SCORE OF 4:**

- Develops all aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information)
- Incorporates relevant information from *at least xxx* documents
- Incorporates relevant outside information
- Supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

**SCORE OF 3:**

- Develops all aspects of the task with little depth *or* develops most aspects of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze, and/or evaluate information)
- Incorporates some relevant information from some of the documents
- Incorporates limited relevant outside information
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some minor inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme

**SCORE OF 2:**

- Minimally develops all aspects of the task *or* develops some aspects of the task in some depth
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis
- Incorporates limited relevant information from the documents or consists primarily of relevant information copied from the documents
- Presents little or no relevant outside information
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a general plan of organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

**SCORE OF 1:**

- Minimally develops some aspects of the task
- Is descriptive; may lack understanding, application, or analysis
- Makes vague, unclear references to the documents or consists primarily of relevant and irrelevant information copied from the documents
- Presents no relevant outside information
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, or details; may include inaccuracies
- May demonstrate a weakness in organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

**SCORE OF 0:**

Fails to develop the task or may only refer to the theme in a general way; *OR* includes no relevant facts, examples, or details; includes only the historical context and/or task as copies from the test booklet; *OR* includes only entire documents copied from the test booklet; *OR* is illegible; *OR* is a blank paper



## LOCATION

Geographers describe the location of an area in both absolute and relative terms.

### **Absolute Location**

In terms of its absolute location, the United States is located in the Northern and Western hemispheres. With the exception of Hawaii, the country is located on the continent of North America. The country is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Pacific Ocean on the west.

### **Relative Location**

Geographers also consider an area's relative location, or where it is located in relation to other places. For example, the United States is located south of Canada and north of Mexico. California is west of New York.

The relative location of a place can also change over time. For much of the country's history, Americans felt relatively isolated from Europe and Asia. Likewise, people in the West felt relatively isolated from the East.

Changes in transportation and communication technologies changed these perceptions. For example, the number of post offices in the nation leaped from 75 in 1790 to 8,450 in 1830. Regular mail delivery made it easier for people in distant places to communicate with one another. Improved communication and transportation helped tie together different parts of the country as it grew in both size and population.

## ANALYZING DOCUMENTS

This map shows the 50 states of the United States.

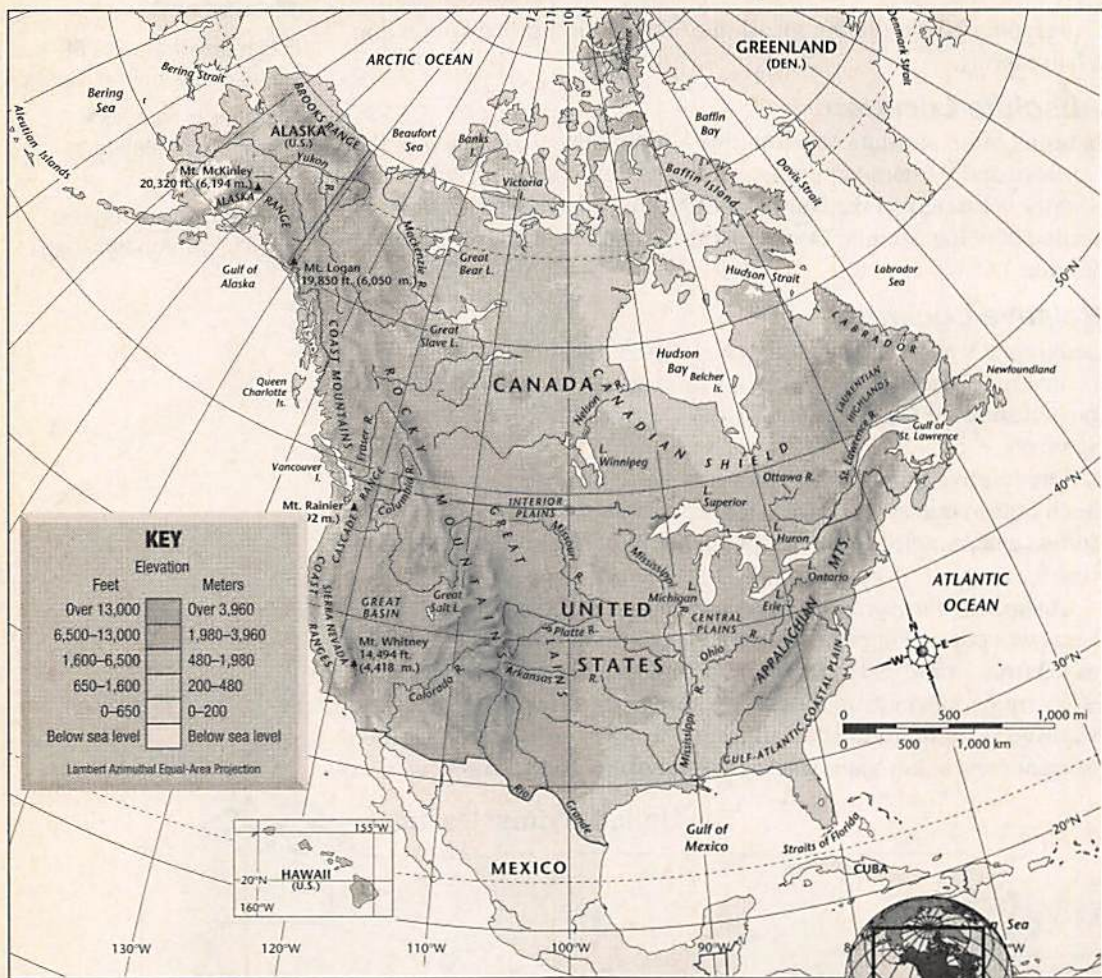
- Where is New York located in relation to Florida?
- What types of regions are shown on this map?

**The United States: Political**





## The United States and Canada: Physical



## ANALYZING DOCUMENTS

Study the map on this page; then answer the following questions.

- What major landform occupies the central region of the United States?
- Which mountain range is higher, the Appalachians or the Rocky Mountains?

## PLACE

Geographers study both the physical and human characteristics of places. Both physical and human characteristics of the geography of the United States have had a huge impact on the development of the country.

**Physical Characteristics**

Physical characteristics include landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and climate. Because of its size, the United States has a wide variety of landforms. As the map on this page shows, the **Great Plains** and the



**Central Plains** occupy the central regions of the country, also known as the Midwest. The rich soils and climate of the Midwest encouraged Americans to move to these regions, where they could acquire inexpensive farmland. The **Mississippi River** cuts through the Central Plains as it flows south to the Gulf of Mexico. Boats traveling along the Mississippi allowed farmers and traders to transport their goods to markets throughout the country.

Two mountain ranges run from north to south on either side of the central plains regions. In the east are the lower, older **Appalachian Mountains**. In the west are the **Rocky Mountains**. The Rockies are a cordillera, or a related set of mountain ranges, that stretches from northern Alaska to Mexico, forming the longest mountain chain in North America.

### ***Human Characteristics***

Several waves of immigration have created a unique cultural mix of people in the United States. People from every region of the world have settled in the United States. As a result, the region's human characteristics, such as a language, religion, and customs, are varied. About half of all African Americans live in the South. About 9 percent of southern residents are of Latino origin.

In general, population density is greater in the eastern half of the country. The most densely settled region of the country is the Northeast Corridor, which stretches along the east coast from Washington, D.C., to Boston, Massachusetts.

Compared with those in many nations of the world, people in the United States have long life expectancies, high per capita incomes, and high literacy rates.

## **MOVEMENT**

Geographers study the movement of people, goods, and ideas within an area. The movement of people into and within the United States over the course of the region's history can be broken into the following large patterns.

### ***Bering Strait Land Bridge***

Geographers believe that during the Ice Ages—between about 20,000 and 12,000 years ago—much of the earth's water was frozen into glaciers and ice sheets. As a result, ocean levels dropped, exposing a flat bridge of land between Alaska and eastern Asia where the Bering Strait is today. Over thousands of years, hunters from East Asia crossed the land bridge and gradually spread out over North and South America. These Paleo-Indians were the first humans in the Americas, ancestors of all the Native American peoples.



## ANALYZING DOCUMENTS

The movement of people from east to west put pressure on the government to expand the territory of the United States. Study the map below; then answer the following questions.

- What was the date of the Louisiana Purchase?
- When were the lands of the present-day states of Washington and Oregon added to the country's territory?
- Using the information on this map, describe the acquisition of present-day California.

## European Exploration and Slavery

By the 1500s, better ships and navigation methods allowed European explorers to find their way to North America. The first European newcomers, mainly from Spain, settled in what are now Florida, the Southwest, and Mexico. About a century later, people from France and Great Britain set up colonies on the eastern coast of North America. In addition, millions of Africans were enslaved and brought unwillingly to North America.

## Migration from East to West

During the 1800s, the promise of land and gold led many Americans of European descent to move westward. Native Americans were forced from their lands to locations even further west. Rivers, wagons, canals, and railroads all played a part in the movement of people to the frontiers of the west. **Manifest destiny** was the concept that expressed the American belief that the United States was destined to expand across North America.

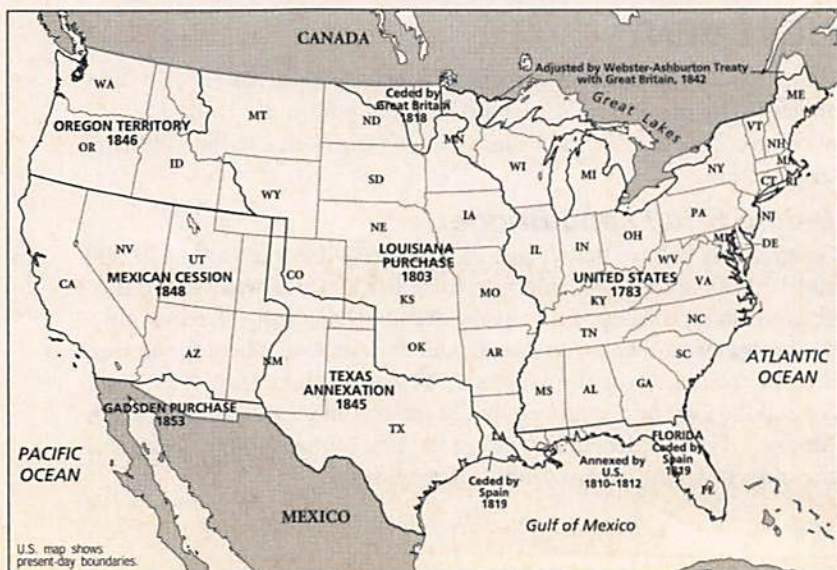
## African American Migration

African Americans moved from the South to the Northeast and Midwest in search of economic opportunities from about 1890 to 1920 and again during the 1940s.

## The Rise of the Sun Belt

Beginning around 1950, many Americans moved from the industrial cities of the North and Midwest to the so-called **Sun Belt**—the southern states stretching from Florida to California. Newcomers were attracted by job opportunities and warmer climates.

## United States Territorial Expansion, 1783–1853





This population shift, along with its corresponding reapportionment of congressional seats, has given the South greater influence in American politics. Once a stronghold for Democrats, the South has become more strongly Republican and conservative.

## REGIONS

The continental United States from east to west covers a distance of over three thousand miles. The states of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean and Alaska in the north Pacific expand the country's geographic dimensions. Given this huge size it is not surprising that geographers can identify hundreds of regions within the country.

### *Different Types of Regions*

Geographers describe regions as places having at least one common characteristic. Regions can be defined by physical characteristics, such as landforms or climate. They can also be defined by cultural characteristics, such as the economy of the area or the political organization of the area. The map on the next page shows regions that share similar economies or land use patterns. Political regions include towns, counties, cities, states, and the United States as a whole.

In the United States, geographers use terms like the Midwest to describe a group of states (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois), or the Northwest (Oregon and Washington) or the Rocky Mountain area. Climatic conditions can cause a region to be identified for its frequency of tornadoes, hurricanes, or snowstorms. The cultural characteristics of people might also designate a region, such as the region around Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where many Amish people live. As you study the history and development of the United States, think about how various immigrant groups gave certain regions distinctive names, for example, New York City's Chinatown.

### *Regions within New York State*

In New York State, some examples of regions include the **Great Lakes** region, the Adirondack Mountains, Long Island, the Finger Lakes, Manhattan, and the Capital District around Albany.

## HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

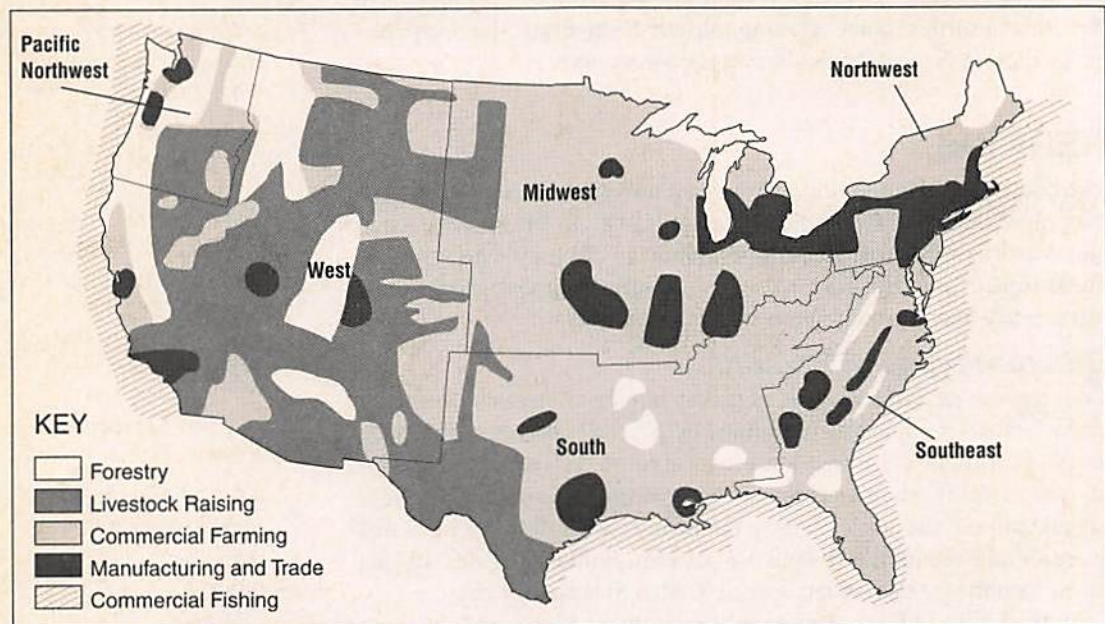
When studying an area, geographers also examine how people use the environment and how they have changed it. What are the consequences of those changes?

### *Early Land Use Patterns*

From the earliest days of settlement, Americans have been interacting with their environment to survive. When the Europeans began to settle along the Atlantic coast, they faced a range of climatic and geographic



### Land Use in the United States



#### ANALYZING DOCUMENTS

Study the land use map on this page; then answer the following questions.

- What is the major land use activity in the Midwest?
- How do the economic activities of the Pacific Northwest compare with those of the Northeast?
- Where are the most concentrated areas of manufacturing and trade located?

conditions. At various points in this nation's history, these conditions both encouraged and discouraged settlement. In some places, Native Americans assisted the Europeans in adapting to their unfamiliar surroundings.

The great Atlantic coastal plain fostered agricultural development in the Mid-Atlantic region, while further to the south, the long, hot summers gave rise to the tobacco and cotton industries. Settlers of coastal South Carolina drained swamps to create thriving rice plantations. The rocky soil of New England discouraged extensive farming, but the rich coastal waters encouraged the development of fishing and shipbuilding. The waterfalls in the area and elsewhere in the Middle Atlantic states encouraged the development of factories that could benefit from water power. These factories produced goods that were then traded all over the world. Port cities, such as Boston, New York, Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans developed as centers of this trade.

#### ***Tourism and Conservation***

In addition to the land use patterns shown on the map above, tourism is another form of land use. The national parks are an example of human-environment interaction in which the landscape and natural resources are preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. Niagara Falls, New York, leads a double life as a tourist attraction for its natural beauty and as a major source of hydroelectric power.



It was only in the late twentieth century that many people began to realize the need to protect and preserve the environment for future generations. Today, geographic issues include waste disposal, air and water pollution, energy sources, energy use, and topics related to demographics, such as the changing composition of the population, the "graying" of America, and the effects of the baby boom generation.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As you continue through this review book, you will have many opportunities to utilize the concepts of location, place, movement, regions, and human-environment interaction. Use the maps located in this unit and elsewhere in this text to help you draw conclusions about the impact geography has had and continues to have on the development of the United States.

## ANALYZING DOCUMENTS

Study the climate map on this page; then answer the following questions.

- Much of the southwestern United States has a hot, dry, arid climate and receives less than 10 inches of rainfall each year. Many people have been moving to this region in recent decades. How do you think climate affects the human-environment interaction in this region?
- Describe the climate of the southeastern half of the United States.

The United States and Canada: Climate Regions

