

SECTION
1

GEOGRAPHY

Land of Three Rivers



2.01 Identify key physical characteristics such as landforms, water forms, and climate and evaluate their influence on the development of cultures in selected African, Asian, and Australian regions.
3.04 Describe how physical processes such as erosion, earthquakes, and volcanoes have resulted in physical patterns on the earth's surface and analyze their effects on human activities.

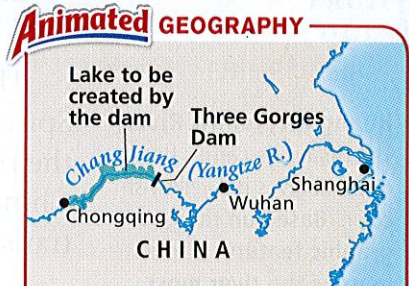
Connecting to Your World

Much like the Mississippi in the United States, the Chang Jiang (chahng jyahng) River in eastern China has been both China's best friend and worst enemy. The fertile farmland and the transportation that the river provides help China feed its enormous population. But seasonal floods take a terrible toll on the million or so people who live near the river's banks. The **Three Gorges Dam** should prevent the floods. The dam will also generate **hydroelectric power**, electricity from water-powered engines. The dam was completed in 2006 but is not projected to begin operating until 2009.

China's Geographic Features

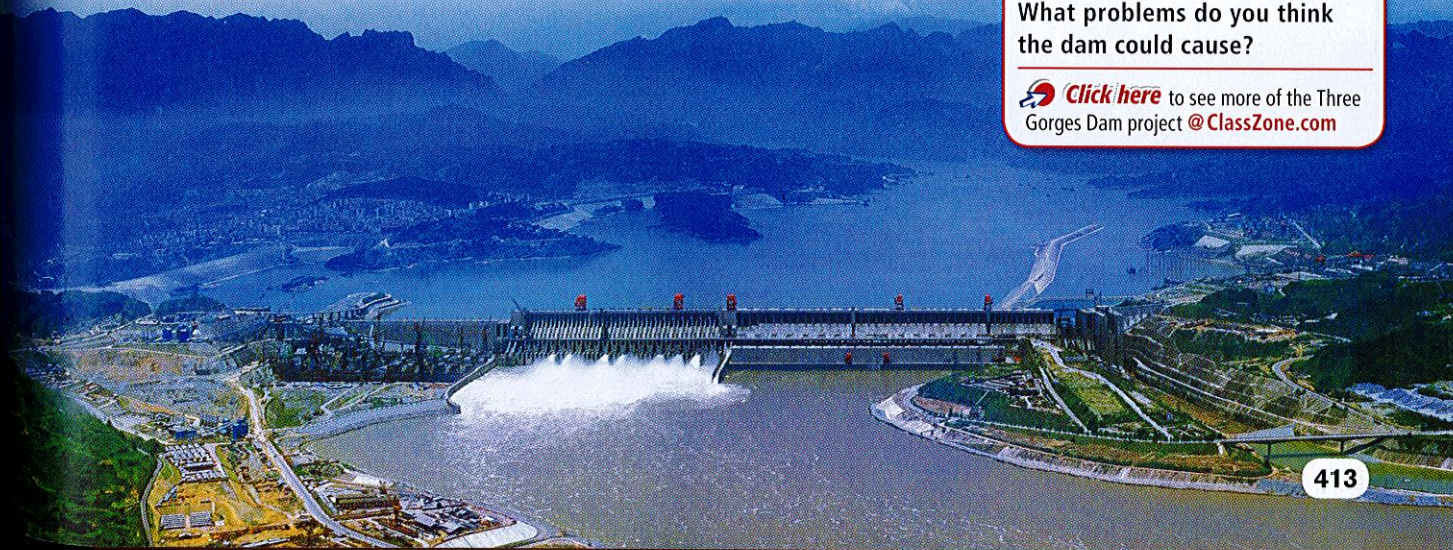
KEY QUESTION What are the main geographic features of western China and eastern China?

Everything about the People's Republic of China is on a big scale. China is the third largest country in area and has a population of 1.3 billion—the largest in the world. Western China contains some of the world's harshest geographic features, while eastern China is one of the world's most densely populated places.

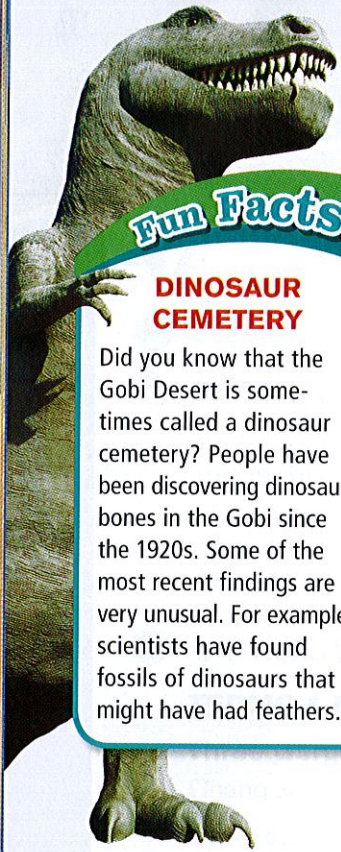


Three Gorges Dam Officials say the dam will relieve flooding on the Chang Jiang and produce more energy. Some people disagree. **What problems do you think the dam could cause?**

[Click here](#) to see more of the Three Gorges Dam project @ [ClassZone.com](#)



HINA



Fun Facts!

DINOSAUR CEMETERY

Did you know that the Gobi Desert is sometimes called a dinosaur cemetery? People have been discovering dinosaur bones in the Gobi since the 1920s. Some of the most recent findings are very unusual. For example, scientists have found fossils of dinosaurs that might have had feathers.

Huang He (Yellow River)

The Huang He carries fine dirt that gives it a yellowish color. Based on the geographic features shown here, is the river most likely flowing through eastern or western China?

Western China One important fact about western China is that its rugged terrain acted as a barrier between China and other lands. As a result, Chinese culture developed with limited outside influences.

Western China is dotted with dramatic mountain ranges. The **Himalayas** (HIHM•uh•LAY•uhz), which separate China from India, contain the world's highest mountains. The Plateau of Tibet lies between the Himalayas and the Kunlun mountains. This **plateau**, or high area of flat land, is more than 13,000 feet above sea level and is called the "Roof of the World."

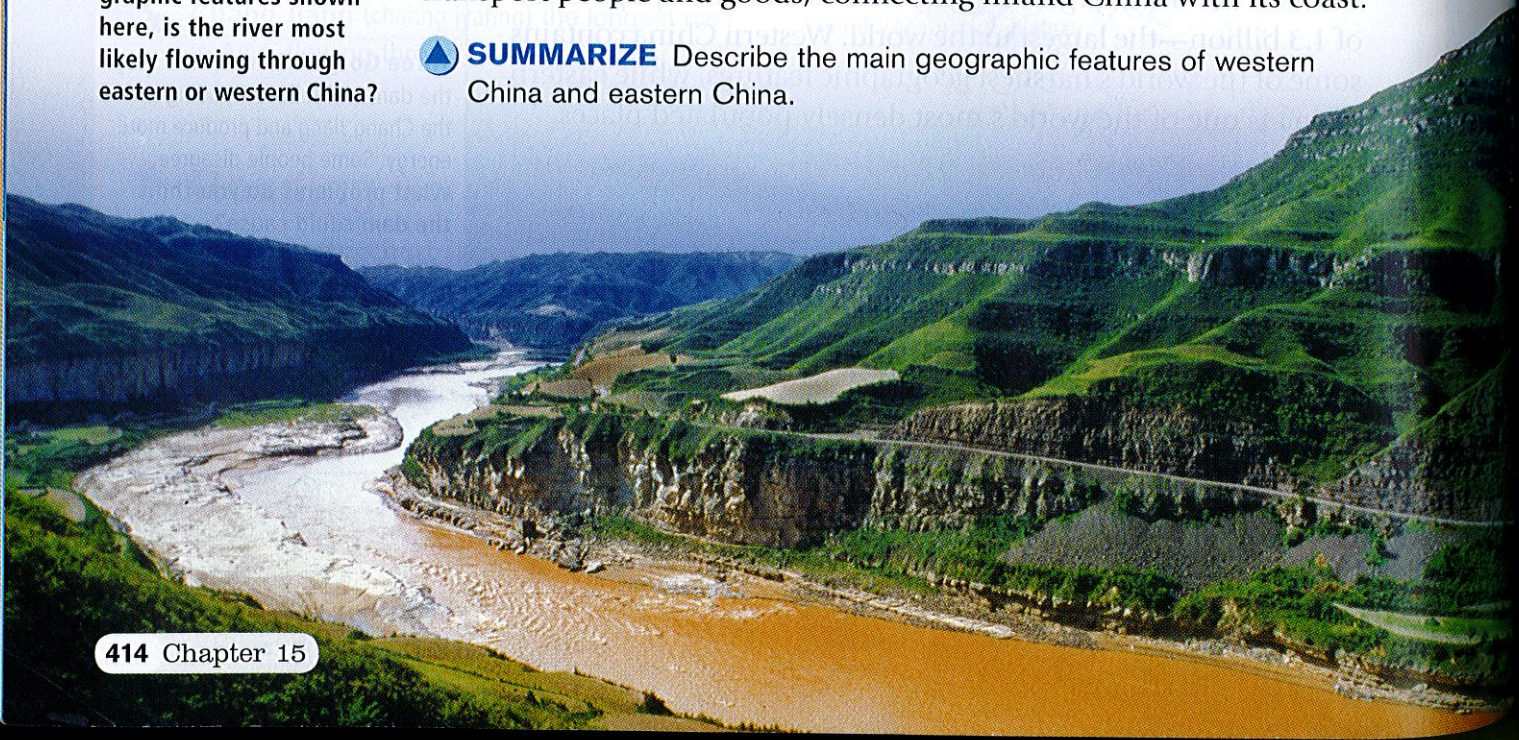
Two vast deserts stretch across northwestern China. The **Taklimakan** (TAH•kluh•muh•KAHN) **Desert** is the world's second largest sand desert. And the **Gobi** (GOH•bee) **Desert**, a high desert of China and Mongolia, is about five times the size of Colorado. With so much harsh landscape, western China has far fewer people than eastern China.

Eastern China An important feature of eastern China is its rivers. Three major rivers start in the highlands of western China and flow through eastern China. You can see all three on the map opposite:

1. The **Huang He** (hwahng huh) **A**, or Yellow River, flows through northeast China. The river's floods deposit silt on the North China Plain, making it one of China's richest farming areas.
2. The **Chang Jiang** **B**, or Yangtze River, is 3,915 miles long. It is the longest river in Asia and is a very busy waterway.
3. The **Xi** (she) **Jiang** **C**, or West River, flows through southeast China. It is a major transportation route in southern China.

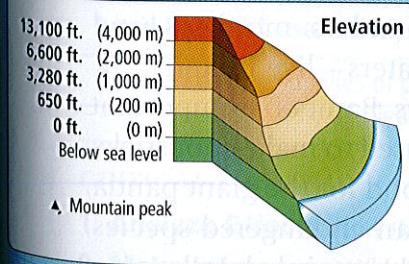
These rivers are critical to productive farming in eastern China. Spring floods deposit silt, a fertile soil good for growing crops, along the riverbanks. Because of the rich, flat river basins that result, most Chinese farmers live in eastern China's river valleys. The rivers also transport people and goods, connecting inland China with its coast.

SUMMARIZE Describe the main geographic features of western China and eastern China.



Physical Geography of China

 [Click here](#) to see geographic features of China @ClassZone.com

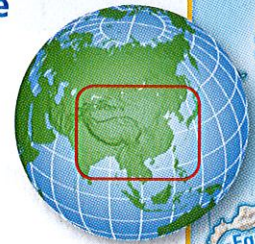


CONNECT Geography & Culture READING A PHYSICAL MAP

Locate China's three main rivers on the map. As you study the map,

- note the direction the rivers flow
- think about how the direction of flow might affect travel in China
- consider how areas of high and low elevation might affect local populations

- 1. Location** Which of the three main rivers labeled on this map does not start in the Plateau of Tibet?
- 2. Movement** Would it be easier for boats to travel from east to west along the rivers of China or from west to east? Explain.



China's Varied Climate and Resources

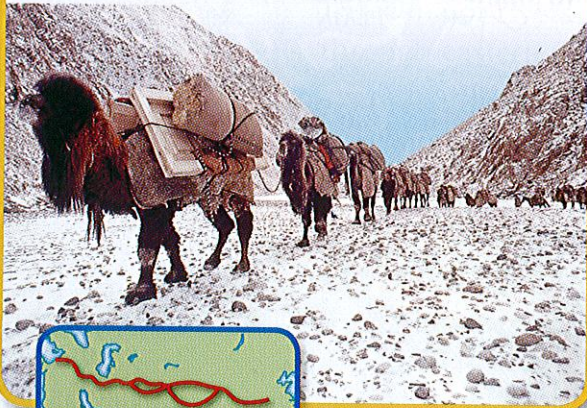
KEY QUESTION How are the climate and resources of western and eastern China different?

Western and eastern China have very different climates and natural resources. Because of its climate differences, China also has a variety of plants and animals.

CONNECT Geography & History

The Silk Roads

Trade moved along routes on the edges of the Taklimakan and Gobi deserts. Traders traveled the routes by camel caravans. Among other items, they carried silver, jade, medicines, foods, and animals. But they carried so much silk that the routes came to be called the Silk Roads.



Life in Western China You've learned that western China is thinly populated because it is mostly mountains and deserts. The highest mountains are cold year-round. At lower elevations, summers are cool but sunny. Animals such as wild sheep and mountain antelope roam the highlands. Forests grow at elevations of around 12,000 feet and provide a home for wildcats.

As you might guess, almost nothing survives in the Gobi and Taklimakan deserts. They get little rain and have very sparse vegetation. Temperatures dip below 0°F in winter and rise to higher than 120°F in summer.

Many highlanders are nomadic herders of horses and of grazing animals, such as yaks, sheep, and goats. Because vegetation is scarce—mostly mosses and short shrubs—grazing herds must keep moving to find new sources of food.

Western China's main resources are petroleum, natural gas, and lead. Pipelines carry both oil and natural gas to the east.

Life in Eastern China Eastern China has a milder climate than western China. Northeastern China has a climate like the Northeast and Midwest of the United States, with cold winters, warm summers, and enough rain for farming. Mixed and broadleaf forests provide homes for leopards, deer, and more than 265 kinds of birds. In contrast, southeastern China has mild winters and hot, rainy summers. The region has mixed forests of wild tea and citrus trees, oaks, cypresses, and pines. Alligators, giant salamanders, monkeys, and pangolins—scaly animals that look like anteaters—live inland.

Wherever rain falls in China, bamboo grows. Bamboo is important to Chinese culture. Its long, woody stems are used to make chopsticks, among other things. Bamboo is also a vital food for the giant panda, China's most treasured animal. The panda, an endangered species, spends about 12 hours a day eating—and it eats mainly bamboo.

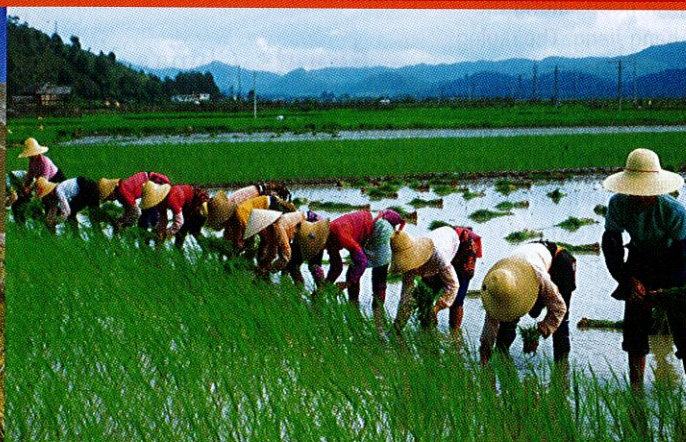
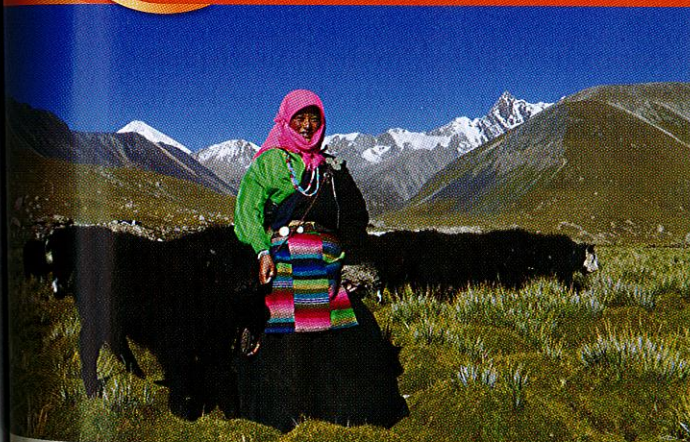
Most of China's farmland is in eastern China. Many people think that all Chinese farmers grow rice, but in northern China they grow wheat, soybeans, and millet. These crops need less water than rice. Rice is grown in the rainy southeast, where the climate is so mild and the soil is so rich that farmers grow two or three crops a year.

Chinese farmers use traditional methods that are centuries old. They don't have the huge tractors or other large farm equipment that U.S. farmers use. The use of farm machinery, such as small hand-held tractors, has been on the rise since the 1990s, but China still relies on long hours of human labor in the fields.

Eastern China has abundant natural resources, such as tin and iron. In 2003, China produced about 35 percent of the world's coal, but at a deadly cost; 80 percent of all deaths in coal mines worldwide occur in China. The government is using clean coal technologies and modernizing equipment to improve safety.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST Compare the climate and resources of western and eastern China.

COMPARING Western and Eastern China



WESTERN

EASTERN

Population	thinly populated	heavily populated
Geographic Features	an arid climate and little usable farmland	important rivers, plentiful rain, rich farmland
Land Use	used mostly for grazing animals	used for agriculture
Resources	supplies of petroleum, natural gas, and lead	rich with coal and other resources

CRITICAL THINKING

- Analyze Effects** How is land use in each part of China affected by its geographic features?
- Make Inferences** Which part of China would most likely contribute more to the country's overall economy?