



Studying Geography

The Big Idea

Physical geography and human geography contribute to the study of history.

Main Ideas

- Geography is the study of places and people.
- Studying location is important to both physical and human geography.
- Geography and history are closely connected.

Key Terms

geography
landforms
climate
environment
region
resources

If YOU were there . . .

Your parents are historians researching a city that disappeared long ago. You go with them to a library to help search for clues to the city's location and fate. While thumbing through a dusty old book, you find an ancient map stuck between two pages. Marked on the map are rivers, forests, mountains, and straight lines that look like roads. It is a map that shows the way to the lost city!

How can this map help you find the city?

Studying Places and People

When you hear about an event on the news, the first questions you ask may be, "Where did it happen?" and "Who was there?" Historians ask the same questions about events that happened in the past. That is why they need to study geography.

Geography is the study of the earth's physical and cultural features. Physical features include mountains and rivers. Cultural features include people, cities, and countries. The characteristics of human populations are also cultural features. These characteristics are called demographics. Demographics include age, gender, and race.

Physical Geography Physical geography is the study of the earth's land and features. People who work in this field are called physical geographers.

Physical geographers organize the earth's land surface into seven large landmasses, called continents. Except for Antarctica and Australia, the continents are further organized into different countries. Earth's land surface is also organized into different regions. You'll learn about regions later in this lesson.

Physical geographers also study **landforms**, the natural features of the land's surface. Mountains, valleys, plains, and other such places are landforms. In addition, they study **climate**, the pattern of weather conditions in a certain area

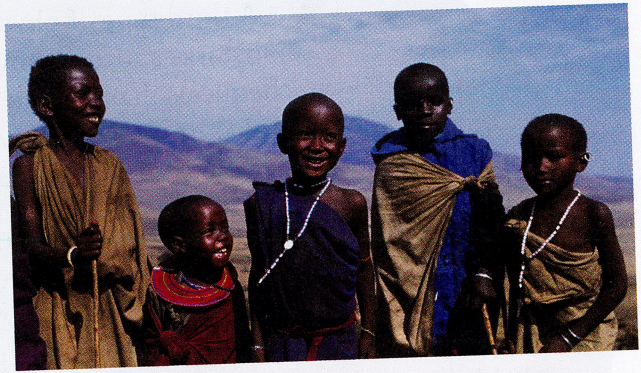
Geography

Geography is the study of the earth's physical and cultural features.



Physical Geography

The study of the earth's physical features and processes, such as mountains, rivers, oceans, rainfall, and climate, including this section of California's coast



Human Geography

The study of the earth's people, such as these children in the African country of Tanzania, and their way of life, homes and cities, beliefs, and travels.

over a long period of time. Climate is not the same as weather. Weather is the atmospheric conditions at a specific time and place. If you say that your city has cold winters, you are talking about climate. If you say it is below freezing and snowing today, you are talking about the weather.

Climate affects many features of an area. For example, it affects plant life. Tropical rainforests require warm air and heavy rain, whereas a dry climate can create deserts. Climate also affects landforms. For example, constant wind can wear down mountains into flat plains.

Although climate affects landforms, landforms can also affect climate. For example, the Coast Ranges in northern California are mountains parallel to the Pacific coast. As air presses against these mountains, it rises and cools. Any moisture that the air was carrying falls as rain. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the range, the Central Valley stays dry. In this way, a mountain range creates two very different climates.

Landforms and climate are part of a place's environment. The **environment** includes all the living and nonliving things that affect life in an area. This includes the area's climate, land, water, plants, soil, animals, and other features.

Human Geography The other branch of geography is human geography—the study of people and the places where they live. Specialists in human geography study many different things about people and their cultures. What kind of work do people do? How do they get their food? What are their homes like? What religion, or set of mutual values that help explain the world, do they practice?

Human geography also deals with how the environment affects people. For example, how do people who live near rivers protect themselves from floods? How do people who live in deserts survive? Do different environments affect the size of families? Do people in certain environments live longer? Why do some diseases spread easily in some environments but not in others? As you can see, human geographers study many interesting questions about people and this planet.