Chapter 1 – A Geographer’s World

Section Notes
1. Studying Geography
2. Geography Themes and Essential Elements
3. The Branches of Geography

Close-up
The Five Themes of Geography

Quick Facts
Chapter 1 Visual Summary

Video
Impact of Studying Geography

Maps
High School Soccer Preparation
The United States

Images
What is Geography?
Looking at the World
Geography Defined
Meteorologist at Work

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Studying Geography

The Big Idea

The study of geography and the use of geographic tools helps us view the world in new ways.

Main Ideas

- Geography is the study of the world, its people, and the landscapes they create.
- Geographers look at the world in many different ways.
- Maps and other tools help geographers study the planet.
Main Idea 1:
Geography is the study of the world, its people, and the landscapes they create.

- **Geography** is the study of the world, its people, and the landscapes they create
  - A place’s **landscape** is all the human and physical features that make it unique.

- Geography as a science
  - Geographers ask questions about how the world works.
  - Geographers gather and interpret data.

- Geography as a **social science**, a field that studies people and the relationships among them
  - Geographers ask questions about people and their lives.
  - Geographers visit places and talk to the people who live there to learn about lives and communities.
Main Idea 2: Geographers look at the world in many different ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Level</th>
<th>Regional Level</th>
<th>Global Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Geographers ask questions to figure out why people live and work the way they do.</td>
<td>• A <strong>region</strong> is a part of the world that has one or more common features that distinguish it from surrounding areas.</td>
<td>• Geographers ask how events and ideas from one region of the world affect people in other regions to learn how people interact globally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can help improve people’s lives by making contributions to community planning</td>
<td>• Physical and/or human characteristics can define a region.</td>
<td>• Try to find relationships among people who live far apart</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Dividing world into regions makes it easier to study.</td>
<td>• Provide information that helps us figure out how to live in a rapidly changing world</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Comparing regions can build understanding.</td>
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Main Idea 3: Maps and other tools help geographers study the planet.

**Maps**
- A **map** is a flat drawing that shows all or part of Earth’s surface.
- Details can be distorted, or altered, in order to show on a flat surface.
- Easy to work with
- Can show a great variety of information

**Globes**
- A **globe** is a spherical, or ball-shaped, model of the entire planet.
- Can show world as it really is
- More expensive to make
- Usually only show where places are and what features they have
Other Tools

- Satellite images
  - Show what an area looks like from above Earth
  - Collect information that can’t be seen from the planet’s surface
- Computer programs
  - Create, update, and compare maps
- Measuring devices to record data
- Notebook and tape recorder to take notes
The Big Idea

Geographers have created two different but related systems for organizing geographic studies.

Main Ideas

- The five themes of geography help us organize our studies of the world.
- The six essential elements of geography highlight some of the subject’s most important ideas.
Main Idea 1:
The five themes of geography help us organize our studies of the world.

- Geographers use themes that can be applied to nearly everything that they study.
  - Location
  - Place
  - Human-Environment Interaction
  - Movement
  - Regions
Themes of Geography

**Location**

- Every point on Earth has a location.
- **Absolute location** is a specific description of where a place is, such as an address.
- **Relative location** is a general description of where a place is.

**Place**

- Place refers to an area’s landscape, the features that define the area and make it different from other places.
- Can include land, climate, and people
Themes of Geography, continued

**Human-Environment Interaction**
- An area’s **environment** includes its land, water, climate, plants, and animals.
- Geographers study how people interact with their environment.

**Movement**
- Study of why and how people move, including the roads and routes that make movement so common.

**Regions**
- Geographers divide the world into regions.
- Make comparisons between regions to help geographers learn why each place has developed the way it has.
Main Idea 2:
The six essential elements of geography highlight some of the subject’s most important ideas.

- In addition to the five themes, geographers use a system of standards and essential elements.
  - Identify the most important ideas in the study of geography
- National geography standards list 18 basic ideas that are central to the study of geography.
- Essential elements are based on the standards.
  - Each element is a big idea that links several standards together.
- The six essential elements build on the five themes of geography, so they are closely related.
Essential Elements of Geography

The World in Spatial Terms

• How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective
• How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context
• How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth’s surface

Places and Regions

• The physical and human characteristics of places
• How people create regions to interpret Earth’s complexity
• How culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions
## Essential Elements, continued

### Physical Systems
- The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth’s surface
- The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on Earth’s surface

### Human Systems
- The characteristics, distributions, and migration of human populations
- The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics
- The patterns and networks of economic interdependence
- The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement
- How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth’s surface
Essential Elements, continued

Environment and Society

- How human actions modify the physical environment
- How physical systems affect human systems
- Changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources

The Uses of Geography

- How to apply geography to interpret the past
- How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future
The Branches of Geography

The Big Idea

Geography is divided into two main branches—physical and human geography.

Main Ideas

• Physical geography is the study of landforms, water bodies, and other physical features.

• Human geography focuses on people, their cultures, and the landscapes they create.

• Other branches of geography examine specific aspects of the physical or human world.
Main Idea 1:
Physical geography is the study of landforms, water bodies, and other physical features.

- **Physical geography** is the study of the world’s features—its landforms, bodies of water, climates, soils, and plants.

- Physical geographers
  - Want to know all about the different features found on Earth and what causes them
  - Take detailed measurements and track changes over time to help answer questions

- Reasons to study physical geography include:
  - To learn how the world works and to better understand our world
  - To help us to learn to live with Earth’s changes and dangers and be prepared for them
Main Idea 2:
Human geography focuses on people, their cultures, and the landscapes they create.

- **Human geography** is the study of the world’s people, communities, and landscapes.

- Human geographers
  - Study the world’s people, past and present
  - Look at where people live and why
  - Study what people do
Specialization

• Many human geographers specialize in a specific area of study because people’s lives are so different around the world.

Reasons to study human geography include:

• Helping us to better understand people in other cultures
• Helping people improve their landscapes and situations
• Making contributions to improve city planning and development and to protect the environment
Main Idea 3:
Other branches of geography examine specific aspects of the physical or human world

- **Cartography**
  - The science of making maps
  - Develop accurate maps on almost any scale and keep them up to date

- **Hydrology**
  - The study of water on Earth
  - Work to measure and protect world’s supply of water by studying the world’s river systems and rainfall patterns

- **Meteorology**
  - The study of weather and what causes it
  - Use information about weather patterns to make predictions
The Five Themes of Geography

Geographers use five major themes, or ideas, to organize and guide their studies.

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**Location**  The theme of location describes where something is. The mountain shown above, Mount Rainier, is in west-central Washington.

**Place**  Place describes the features that make a site unique. For example, Washington, D.C., is our nation’s capital and has many great monuments.

**Regions**  Regions are areas that share common characteristics. The Mojave Desert, shown here, is defined by its distinctive climate and plant life.

**Movement**  This theme looks at how and why people and things move. Airlines like this one in Dallas, Texas, help people move around the world.

**Human-Environment Interaction**  People interact with their environments in many ways. Some, like this man in Florida, use the land to grow crops.

**Analyzing Visuals**
Which of the five themes deals with the relationships between people and their surroundings?
What Is Geography?

Geography is the study of the world, its people, and the landscapes they create. To study a place’s geography, we look at its physical and human features.

The physical features of Algeria include huge deserts full of tall sand dunes.

Many Algerians live in small villages like this one. The village is one of Algeria's human features.

Together, Algeria's physical and human features create the country's landscape.

What is the landscape of this part of Algeria like?
Looking at the World

Geographers look at the world at many levels. At each level, they ask different questions and discover different types of information. By putting information gathered at different levels together, geographers can better understand a place and its role in the world.

ANALYZING VISUALS Based on these photos, what are some questions a geographer might ask about London?

Local Level This busy neighborhood in London, England, is a local area. A geographer here might study local foods, housing, or clothing.

Regional Level As a major city, London is also a region. At this level, a geographer might study the city’s population or transportation systems.

Global Level London is one of the world’s main financial centers. Here a geographer might study how London’s economy affects the world.
Physical Geography
The study of Earth’s physical features, including rivers, mountains, oceans, weather, and other features, such as Victoria Falls in southern Africa

Human Geography
The study of Earth’s people, including their ways of life, homes, cities, beliefs, and customs, like those of these children in Malawi, a country in central Africa

Geography
The study of Earth’s physical and cultural features
Meteorology is the study of weather. This meteorologist is using computers to follow and predict the movement of a powerful storm.
Maps usually give geographers more information about a place than globes do. This map, for example, shows rates of soccer participation in the United States.
The United States
Physical geography—the study of the world’s physical features—is one main branch of geography.

Human geography—the study of the world’s people and how they live—is the second main branch.

Geographers use many tools to study the world. The most valuable of these tools are maps.
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