

Summary: People and the Land

How Land Affects People

The land and its resources affect where and how people live. Many people settle in places where they can earn a living. For example, New York City is on the Atlantic coast. It has a good harbor for shipping. Shipping and trade helped the city's economy grow. This economy continues to provide jobs for many people today.

Thousands of people moved to San Francisco, California, when miners discovered gold near there. Stores and restaurants opened to serve the growing number of miners.

Many people settle in places such as Florida and Arizona because they like the environment, which includes pleasant weather. Geography affects how people have fun. People ski on mountains. Other people fish in lakes, rivers, and oceans.

Changing the Environment

The land is always changing. Natural forces such as earthquakes and volcanoes cause sudden changes. Wind and rain can slowly wear away soil and rock. They can change tall, steep mountains to lower, rounded mountains.

People also change the land. These changes affect the environment in both good and bad ways. Building highways makes travel easier, but the land can no longer be used for other things, like farming. Building dams provides electricity, but it changes the wetland environments. Strip mining for coal provides fuel, but it can cause water pollution.

Many ecosystems make up our environment. Each part of an ecosystem affects all the other parts. For example, a lake is an ecosystem that has water, birds, fish, and plants. If the water becomes polluted, it can harm the plants and animals there.

Today, people practice conservation to save our resources. Conservation helps protect the environment and its ecosystems. Using water, gas, and electricity wisely are ways to conserve resources. Protecting wilderness areas, recycling, and passing laws to control pollution are other ways that people conserve resources.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

environment *noun*, the surroundings in which people, plants, and animals live

wetland *noun*, a moist area such as a swamp or marsh that provides a home for wildlife

pollution *noun*, anything that makes the water, air, or soil dirty and unhealthy

ecosystem *noun*, a community of plants and animals, along with nonliving things, such as soil, air, and water

conservation *noun*, the protection and wise use of natural resources



After You Read

REVIEW In what way did the geography of New York City help it grow?

What two things helped the city's economy grow? How do these things affect today's economy? Underline two sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW In what way does conservation save resources? What two things does conservation help to protect? Draw a box around the sentence that tells the answer.