

Summary: People and the Land

How Land Affects People

Geography affects how cities grow. San Diego, California, is one of the largest cities in the United States. It has a big harbor on the Pacific Ocean. Shipping and trade helped San Diego grow. It has the location and resources that allow many people to live there.

Denver, Colorado, began to grow when gold and silver were found nearby. Businesses opened when more people came to work in the mines. The city grew as its economy grew.

People live where they can find jobs. Others live in places because they like the environment. Geography affects what people do for fun. In mountainous places, people ski in the winter and hike in the summer. In warm places, people waterski.

Changing the Land

Natural forces, such as wind and water, change the land slowly over time. The Colorado River has carved the Grand Canyon through erosion. Water and wind can also form new land. Soil that is washed away or blown away can collect in another place. Much of Louisiana was formed by soil the Mississippi River carried there.

Humans also change the land. Some human activities make things easier for people. They can also hurt the environment or change how it is used. Highways make travel easier, but then the land can no longer be farmed. Mines provide jobs and mineral resources, but the chemicals used can cause pollution. This can make the environment unsafe for fish, wildlife, and people.

All parts of an ecosystem are connected. People can change an ecosystem without knowing it. Zebra mussels attached themselves to ships. The ships carried the mussels to the Great Lakes from a different ecosystem. Now, they have spread throughout the Great Lakes. The mussels clog pipes and eat food that local fish depend on. Today, people are more aware of the way their activities change the environment.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

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

erosion *noun*, the process by which water and wind wear away the land

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

ecosystem *noun*, a community of plants and animals along with the surrounding soil, air, and water



After You Read

REVIEW In what ways did San Diego's location cause it to grow? Which two industries helped San Diego grow? Which geographical feature made this possible? Circle the words that tell the answers.

REVIEW What is one example of how natural forces can change the land? Draw a box around the sentences that tell how the Grand Canyon and Louisiana were formed.