

Summary: The Five Themes of Geography

Location and Place

Geography has five themes—location, place, region, movement, and human-environment interaction.

Understanding these themes will help you get a better picture of the world.

Absolute location is the exact spot on Earth where a place can be found. Geographers use imaginary lines on Earth's surface. This helps them locate any place in the world. Lines that run in the same direction as the equator are called latitude lines. They measure distance north and south of the equator. Lines that run between the North and South Poles are called longitude lines. They measure distance east and west of the prime meridian. Relative location is where a place is in relation to other places.

Another theme of geography is place. Every place on Earth has physical features, which include climate, landforms, bodies of water, and plant and animal life. A continent, for example, is a landmass above water. Places can also have human traits, or features created by people, such as governments and cultural traditions.

Region and Movement

A region is a group of places that have physical features or human traits in common. The world can be divided into ten natural regions. A natural region has unique plant and animal life and a special climate.

Movement is another geographic theme. To migrate means to move from one area to settle in another. Migration is a result of push and pull factors. People may be pushed out of an area by overcrowding. People may be pulled to an area in search of greater freedom. Natural barriers, such as mountain ranges and rivers, make migration hard. Oceans, flat land, and transportation make migration easier.

The last theme of geography is human-environment interaction. It occurs because humans depend on, adapt to, or change the world around them. For example, humans affect the environment by clearing land of trees. The environment affects humans when a hurricane destroys homes.

Before You Read

Find and highlight each vocabulary word.

continent *noun*, a landmass above water

absolute location *noun*, the exact spot on Earth where a place can be found

latitude *noun*, the measure of distance north and south of the equator

longitude *noun*, the measure of distance east and west of a line called the prime meridian

relative location *noun*, the location of one place in relation to other places

migrate *verb*, to move from one area to settle in another

After You Read

REVIEW Give an example of a physical feature and an example of a human characteristic where you live. Circle a physical feature and a human trait.

REVIEW How do push and pull factors work together to explain migration? Underline the sentences that tell how push and pull factors work together to explain migration.

REVIEW Name one way in which humans affect the environment and one way the environment affects humans. Draw a box around a way in which humans affect the environment and the environment affects humans.