

# Summary: From Coast to Coast

## North America

North America is home to several large countries and many smaller ones. Canada and the United States are the two largest. Most of Canada and the United States is in the middle latitudes of the northern hemisphere of Earth. This area has a comfortable climate. They are close to the equator and far from the North and South Poles.

North America is almost completely surrounded by water. Once, these oceans and seas separated North America from the rest of the world. Later, the oceans were used as a travel route, transporting people, plants, and animals.

## Regions of the United States and Canada

The United States and Canada share some of the same geographic regions. These regions are varied. The *Atlantic Coastal Plain* has rich farmland and some wetlands. The *Appalachian Mountains* are forest-covered mountains that are old and weathered. The *Central Lowlands* are west of the Appalachians. They are flat farmlands with rich soil. The *Great Plains* have grasslands and few trees. Some areas have farms and cattle ranches. The *Rocky Mountains and Coastal Ranges* run from Mexico all the way to Alaska and are covered with forests. The *Intermountain Region* is dry and has plateaus, basins, and deserts. The *Canadian Shield* is a rocky region that is rich in iron and copper.

Natural processes have shaped the land in North America. Dramatic landforms were created by the action of wind, water, and ice, and moving slabs of Earth's crust. Thousands of years ago, glaciers covered much of North America. As they moved and melted, they smoothed out rough surfaces. They piled up rock and dirt. This created new valleys, lakes, and hills. Other landforms, such as the Grand Canyon, were created by erosion. Erosion happens when wind, rivers, and rain wear away the soil and stone.

North America has a large river system, or network of rivers. They empty into bays, oceans, lakes, and other rivers.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**landforms** *noun*, features of Earth's surface, such as mountains, valleys, and plateaus

**glacier** *noun*, thick sheet of ice that moves slowly across land

**erosion** *noun*, process by which wind, rivers, and rain wear away soil and stone

**river system** *noun*, network of major rivers and their tributaries

### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why do the middle latitudes have a moderate, comfortable climate? Highlight the sentence that answers this question.

**REVIEW** Which regions of Canada and the United States have productive farmland? Circle the names of the regions.

**REVIEW** What are some natural processes that shaped the land in North America? Draw a box around the sentences that tell about some of the natural processes that shaped the land in North America.