

SECTION



What Is Geography?

Why It Matters Now

Just as you affect the environment, the environment affects where you live, what you do, where you go, and what you see.

TERMS & NAMES

landform, relative location, absolute location, place, **physical environment,** human-environment relationships, movement, **migrate, region**

OBJECTIVES

1. Use maps to locate places and regions of importance to Texas.
2. Identify ways in which Texans have modified their environment.
3. Analyze the consequences of human modification of the environment.

MAIN IDEA

Physical characteristics tell only part of the story of geography. Much more can be learned by studying how places are similar to or different from each other and how humans have changed them over time.

INTERACT WITH HISTORY

If someone were to ask “Where are you right now?” how would you answer? Of course, you’re right here, aren’t you? But where is here, exactly? There are many different ways to describe your location, depending upon who is asking and why. For instance, how might you describe your location to someone calling on the phone? How might your description change if you were giving directions to someone from another city or state? What would you do if you were e-mailing a friend in another country?



WHAT Would You Do?

Write your response to *Interact with History* in your *Texas Notebook*.



The Five Themes of Geography

So far you have learned that history is a story about the past. You also have learned that history and geography have a great impact on each other. But what exactly is geography? Many people think geography deals with only the shape of the land—its elevation, **landforms**, and other physical characteristics. However, geography actually has many different parts. It is the study of not only the earth but also its people. To learn more about how people use the land, geographers have broken the study of geography into five distinct parts.

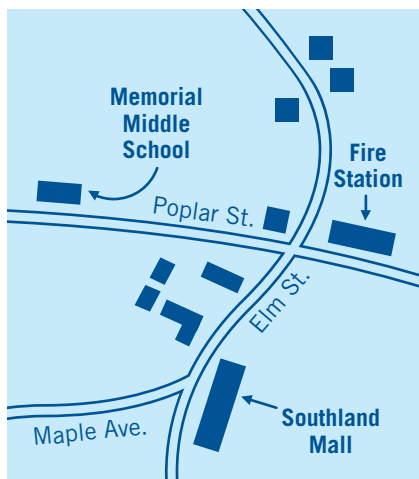
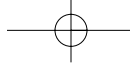
Location

When you think of location, you may think only of what is nearby. If asked to describe the location of your school, you would probably name the street or neighborhood where it is located. When you use street

landform *a feature of the earth's surface, such as a hill, valley, river, or plain*

FIVE THEMES OF GEOGRAPHY

- ★ Location
- ★ Place
- ★ Human-Environment Relationships
- ★ Movement
- ★ Region



▲ The things you notice on your way to school help to define the school's relative location. ● **How might you describe the relative location of the school in this illustration?**

relative location *the position of a place relative, or in comparison, to another place*

absolute location *the exact position of a place on the earth*

physical environment *the external surroundings and conditions in which something exists*

names or refer to other buildings or landmarks, you are providing information about your school's **relative location**.

When geographers think of location, they may want to know exactly where something is found. For example, they might describe the location of your school by giving its exact position on the earth's surface. This would be its **absolute location**. Geographers use maps to show both relative and absolute location. Look at the illustration at left. The buildings near the school help define its relative location.

Place

Imagine that you are on a trip and someone asks what it's like where you are from. How would you describe the place where you live? The first thing you might think about is the natural setting. Is it a flat place or is it hilly? Is there a river, lake, or beach nearby? These features are all part of the **physical environment**.

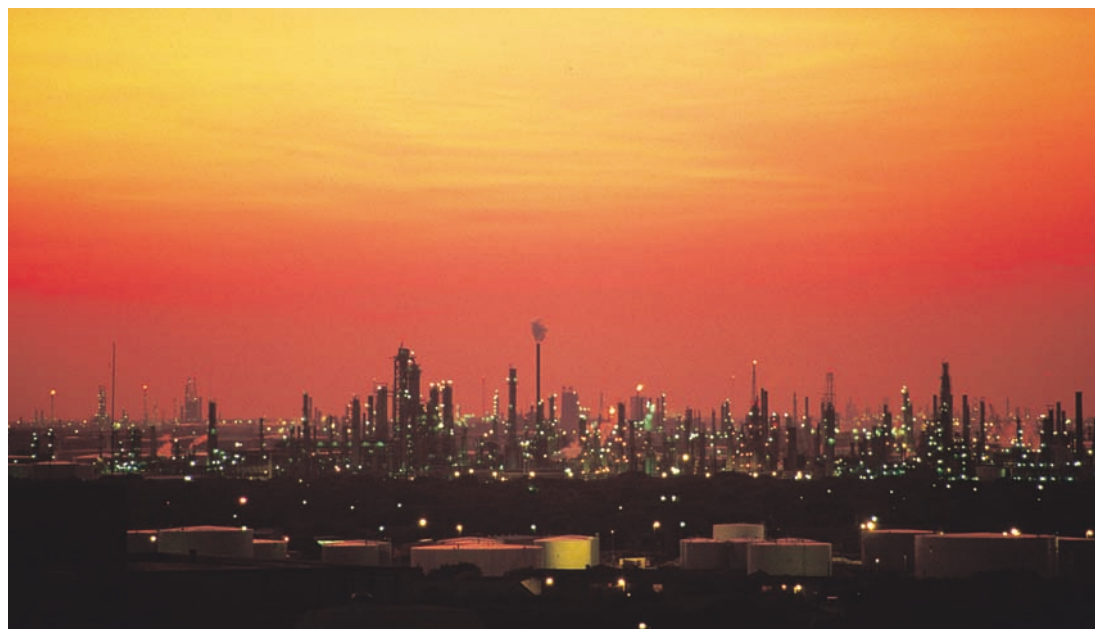
Humans change their physical environment in many ways, such as by building skyscrapers or planting crops. These changes define the human characteristics of a place. Geographers are interested in how physical features, such as climate, vegetation, and landforms, combine with human characteristics to create a unique environment. These features give a place its identity. They are why no two places on earth are exactly alike.

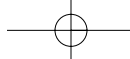
Human-Environment Relationships

Think about the kinds of trees and other plants that grow around your home. Were all of those plants growing there before your home was built? When people move into an area, they often change the natural environment by leveling the land, creating new hills and bodies of water, and bringing in plants from other places. These are just a few examples of how people change their physical surroundings. Almost everything people do causes some sort of change in nature.

Of course, some environmental changes are needed for survival. Without farms to produce food, many people around the world would

▶ Petrochemical plants create jobs and important products. ● **In what ways do you think the natural environment was changed in order to build these plants?**





- ◀ Human activities can have a significant impact on the environment. A lignite (coal) mine such as the one below can transform a landscape. ● **What is one way humans are trying to limit the damage they do to the environment?**

starve to death. On the other hand, some changes, such as polluting the environment, are harmful. For this reason protecting the environment has become a major issue in world politics. By learning how humans harm the physical environment, people can better limit the damage that they do.

Movement

Were you born in the city where you now live? You, your family, or someone you know may have **migrated** to your city from another place. Long ago, colonists from Spain and other countries migrated to Texas, bringing with them their ideas and ways of life. They were followed by other people from around the United States and the world, once again changing the face of Texas. The patterns of human migration are an important part of movement.

However, it is not only people who move from place to place. The next time you go to the grocery store, think about all the foods that traveled to your city from other places. Movement allows you to enjoy foods and many other products from around the world.

Communication is another major part of movement. Imagine what life would be like if you could communicate only with the people on your own block. Fortunately, satellite technology lets us receive news and entertainment from faraway locations through our television sets. Likewise, e-mail and the Internet let people send and receive information around the world in an instant using computers. Communication, like migration and the movement of products, allows humans to change their environment to better meet their needs.

Region

The earth is a very complex place with many different physical and human characteristics. One way geographers make sense of these differences is by dividing the world into geographic **regions**, or areas that have certain features in common.

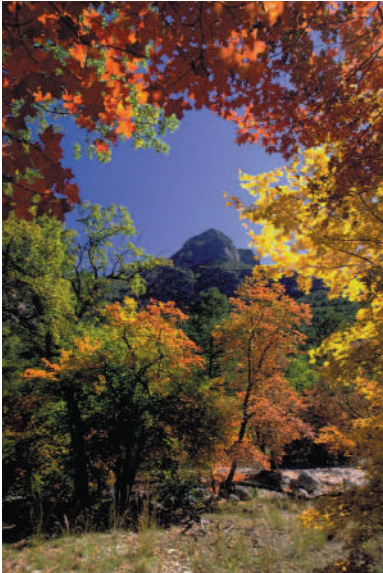
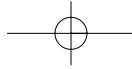
migrate *to move from one place to another*



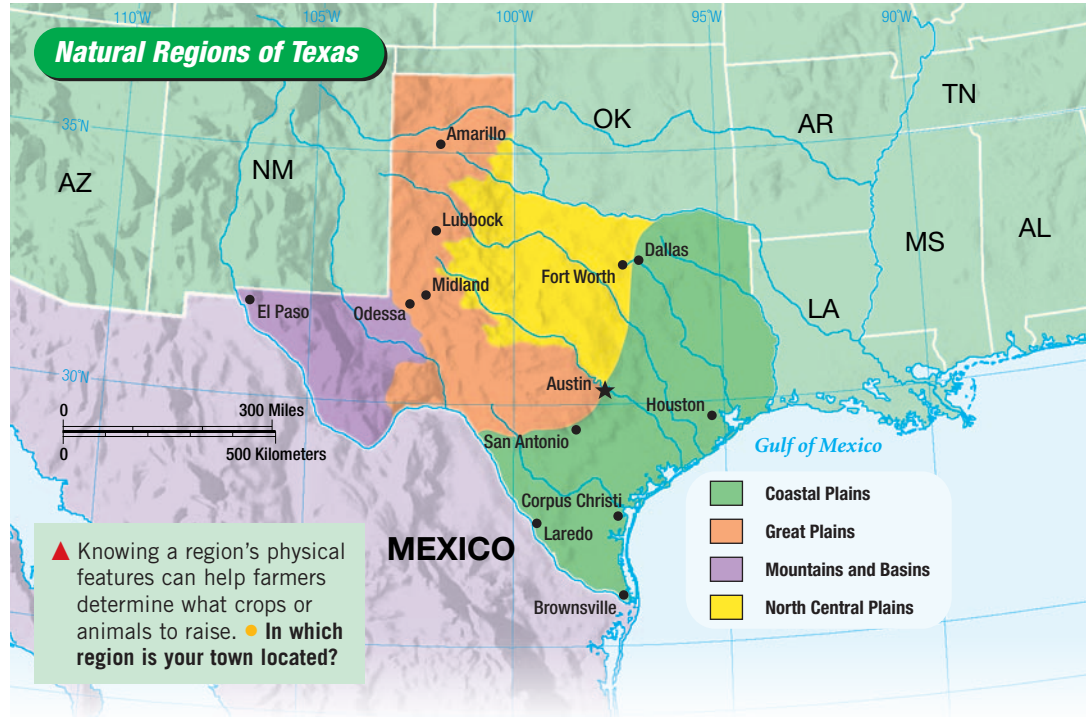
MOVEMENT

From 1990 to 1998, the population of Texas grew by 2.7 million people. Where did these new Texans come from? Between these years Texas had about 1.5 million more births than deaths. Moreover, about 1.2 million more people moved to Texas than moved away. ● **What are some of the reasons why people might move away from Texas?**

region *a geographical area characterized by shared features*



- ▲ Regions vary in physical features such as landforms and vegetation. The highest peak is in Texas in the Guadalupe Mountains in the Mountains and Basins region.
- Why do you think the Apaches and Comanches often camped in the Guadalupe mountains?



The above map shows the four natural regions of Texas: the Mountains and Basins, the Great Plains, the North Central Plains, and the Coastal Plains. Each region has a number of different physical features. For instance, the land in the Great Plains region tends to be semi-arid, or somewhat dry, while the Coastal Plains have more green forests and vegetation. Defining regions helps people quickly find and organize information about their surroundings. For this reason, region—like location, place, human-environment relationships, and movement—is a very important theme in geography.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

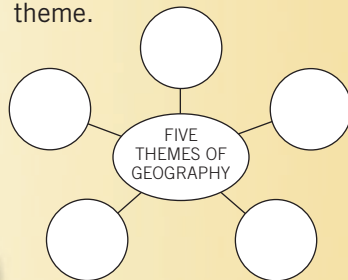
Terms & Names

Identify:

- landform
- relative location
- absolute location
- physical environment
- migrate
- region

Organizing Information

Use a cluster map like the one shown to identify the five themes of geography. Add a brief description of each theme.



Critical Thinking

1. Using the map above, describe in three ways the location of the capital of Texas in relation to the rest of the United States.
2. What are three ways in which humans have modified the physical environment in your community?

3. Describe one way you have been affected by the movement of people, of goods, and of information.

Interact with History

Review your response to *Interact with History* in your Texas Notebook. Did your descriptions use relative or absolute location?

ACTIVITY

Geography

Make a collage, using words and visuals, to illustrate the five themes of geography for the area of Texas in which you live.