

## Geographic Features of North America

Our Earth is covered by **seven** large land masses called **continents** that are surrounded by water. They include **North America, South America, Africa, Asia, Australia, Antarctica,** and **Europe**. Although Europe is not entirely surrounded by water, it is still considered a continent. This land mass is often called *Eurasia*. The United States of America is located on the continent of North America.

Our Earth is also covered by **five oceans**. They are the **Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean, Indian Ocean,** and **Southern Ocean**.



## **Geographic Features of North America** (cont'd)

The continent of North America is divided into *eight geographic regions*. Each region has unique characteristics.

**Coastal Plain:** The Coastal Plain of North America is located along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The land of this region is made up of broad lowlands that provide many excellent harbors. These busy harbors connect North America with the rest of the world.

**Appalachian Highlands:** The Appalachian Highlands are located west of the Coastal Plain and stretch from eastern Canada to western Alabama. The Piedmont region of Virginia is a part of the Appalachian Highlands. The land of this region consists of old, eroded mountains that make up the oldest mountain range in North America.

**Canadian Shield:** The Canadian Shield wraps around the Hudson Bay. This region is shaped like a giant horseshoe and is made up of hills worn down by erosion and hundreds of lakes carved by glaciers.

**Interior Lowlands:** The Interior Lowlands is located west of the Appalachian Mountains and east of the Great Plains. The land of this region is made up of rolling flatlands with many rivers, broad river valleys, and grass covered hills.

**Great Plains:** The Great Plains is located west of the Interior Lowlands and east of the Rocky Mountains. This region is covered by vast, flat grasslands that gradually rise toward the mountain range located in the Rocky Mountains region.

**Rocky Mountains:** The Rocky Mountain region is located west of the Great Plains and east of the Basin and Range. This land consists of rugged mountains at high elevations that stretch from Alaska almost to Mexico. It also contains the **Continental Divide**, an imaginary line that runs from north to south along the peaks of the Rocky Mountains. The Continental Divide determines the directional flow of rivers.

**Basin and Range:** The Basin and Range region is located west of the Rocky Mountains and east of the Sierra Nevadas and the Cascades. The land found in this region is located at different elevations. It contains isolated mountain ranges. **Death Valley**, the lowest point in North America, is found here.

**Coastal Range:** The Coastal Range is located along the Pacific Ocean. It is made up of rugged mountains that stretch from California to Canada and fertile valleys.

