

- Differences in cultural and personal perceptions can often lead to conflict, especially when it comes to deciding how to use an area of land within a region. Ask small groups of students to research the roles that civil engineers, developers, architects, surveyors, environmental specialists and community activists play in the process of land development. Students may investigate the construction of a variety of landmark bridges, tunnels and buildings from history and, applying their knowledge of the work of professionals in the field, hold mock community development meetings discussing goals and objectives from a variety of perspectives. Valuable research material on landmark land development projects from history may be found at the following American Society of Civil Engineers web site:
www.asce.org/history/hp_main.html
- The crisis of the Aral Sea began in 1960 when leaders of the Soviet Union decided that they wanted to double irrigation in the deserts of Central Asia. From 1960 to today, the sea's surface area has dwindled by approximately 60 percent, and its volume by almost 80 percent. Ask students to identify the Aral Sea Region on a map, research the current situation in the area and explain how both physical and human systems have been adversely affected by changes to the sea, once the world's fourth largest lake. How have health conditions, agriculture, fishing and ecosystems been affected? As a follow-up, students may research World Bank and U.N. efforts to address these issues and write their own proposals to rehabilitate the region. More information may be found at the following web site: enrin.grida.no/ara/main_e.htm
- Ever since independence from the British Empire in 1947, India and Pakistan have been feuding over boundaries, with Kashmir a major hot spot. Ask students to create maps of the Kashmir region, research and summarize the historical roots of the Kashmir conflict and create detailed time lines of the Indo-Pakistan wars and modern tensions that have been sparked by this dispute. Have two groups of students role-play Indian and Pakistani negotiators, and ask them to try to reach an agreement to resolve this longstanding border conflict and discuss how to bring sustained peace to the Kashmir region. Human Rights Watch provides ample background material for students at the following web site: www.hrw.org/reports/1999/kashmir/

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.mwccog.org/
The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, an organization of local area governments, addresses regional issues related to important topics such as transportation, the environment, housing and planning.
- www.scar.org/
The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research is a committee of the International Council for Science that organizes, coordinates and promotes scientific research in Antarctica.
- www.reed.edu/~reyn/transport.html
Reed College's "Subway Page" offers hundreds of links to maps, guides, images and special items of interest associated with world subways and other transportation resources.

Suggested Print Resources

- Brimmer, Larry Dane. *Subway: The Story of Tunnels, Tubes and Tracks*. Boyds Mills Press, Honesdale, PA; 2004.
- Kort, Michael G. *Central Asian Republics*. Facts on File, New York, NY; 2004.
- Tallant, Robert. *Evangeline and the Acadians*. Pelican Publishing Company, Gretna, LA; 2000.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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TITLES IN THIS SERIES

- ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY
- GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- HUMAN SYSTEMS
- PHYSICAL SYSTEMS
- PLACES & REGIONS
- THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

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PLACES & REGIONS

Grades 5–9

The study of geogaphy brings together various dimensions of Earth, so that we can increase our knowledge of both the physical and human processes that shape the planet. Enhancing geographic literacy with an in-depth analysis of the spatial aspects of human existence provides students with insight into some of the most challenging questions facing Earth. As world population surges past the six billion mark, as globalization intensifies social and economic interconnections and as the physical environment becomes more and more threatened, *Geography for Students* offers students a unique opportunity to grasp their increasingly complex world and gain a better understanding of their place in it.



Program Summary

Earth is a vast, diverse and complicated place, but breaking it down into regions allows us to simplify the whole. Whether classified as formal, functional or perceptual, regions help us better understand the physical and human characteristics of our planet and allow us to more easily interpret Earth's complexity. Similar climates, landscapes and wildlife, and common languages, cultural identities or economic systems are the characteristic building blocks geographers use to simplify the study of our vast and diverse world. Regions are not static, but continually change over time because of the impact of physical and human systems on Earth's surface. From destructive droughts and natural disasters to the rise and fall of empires and the introduction of modern transportation and communication systems, regions are constantly growing in new directions.

Vocabulary

formal region — A geographic area that has common physical characteristics, such as rivers, mountains or crops, or human characteristics, such as a common religion, cultural identity or economic system.

functional region — A geographic area that is based on the actions of the people who live within its boundaries and organized around a center or focal point, usually a transportation or communication system, or a shared economy.

perceptual region — A geographic area without defined borders that is based on people's feelings and attitudes about a place.

Cajun — An ethnic group descended from French-speaking Acadians, who settled in Louisiana in the 18th century after leaving British-controlled Nova Scotia.

Rust Belt — A geographic area in the northeastern and north-central United States which was known as the Manufacturing Belt, until a period of industrial decline began after World War II.

Great American Desert — A perceptual region west of the Mississippi River that was considered uninhabitable by European explorers in the early 19th century.

The Dust Bowl — The calamitous soil erosion caused by the removal of grasslands and by severe droughts that ruined many farms and farmers in the Great Plains in the 1930s.

Black Sunday — The term used to describe April 14, 1935, the worst "black blizzard" of the Dust Bowl, when dust from over-plowed and over-grazed land caused extensive damage.

Okies — A commonly accepted term referring to a person from Oklahoma.

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Aral Sea — An inland sea in Central Asia that was once the fourth largest lake in the world, but which shrank dramatically due to over-irrigation policies embarked upon by the Soviet Union starting in 1960.

Taliban — A group that established a society based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law, which controlled much of Afghanistan from 1994 to 2001.

Apartheid — The policy of white South African governments to enforce strict racial segregation and discrimination.

Sikh — A follower of the distinctive religious faith of Sikhism, which originated in India in the 15th century.

Kashmir — A disputed region in southwestern Asia claimed by both India and Pakistan. The conflict over Kashmir has triggered two wars between India and Pakistan.

Rhodesia — The former British colonial name of the African nation of Zimbabwe, which achieved its independence in 1980.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- How many regions do you think there are in the United States? Brainstorm as many regions as you can and discuss the physical and human characteristics that link these distinct geographic areas.
- In what types of regions is your school located? How may your area have looked 200 years ago? Discuss the changes that have taken place since that time.
- The study of regions can be very subjective with multiple points of view. How do you perceive the region where you live? Is it beautiful? Exciting? Discuss your perceptions of other regions close to you and around the world.

Focus Questions

1. What is a formal region?
2. Why are the Mojave Desert and Mediterranean Sea regions considered good examples of formal regions?
3. What is a functional region?
4. What is the glue that holds the Washington D.C. metropolitan area together?
5. What is a perceptual region? Provide an example.
6. How are people's perceptions of regions influenced?
7. What is the Great American Desert?
8. What were the main causes of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s?
9. How did many people respond to the Dust Bowl?

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10. What were the main causes of the shrinking of the Aral Sea?
11. When did India gain its independence from the British Empire? How did this affect Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the region?
12. What changes has Pakistan gone through since its independence?
13. Why is there an ongoing dispute regarding the status of Kashmir?
14. How was Rhodesia founded? What happened after it won its independence?

Follow-up Discussion

- The "fansheds" of sports teams are great examples of functional regions. Discuss how collegiate and national sports teams can connect people in particular geographic areas. Analyze the impact of local Little League and high school teams in your specific region.
- Based on expert descriptions of the Great Plains as both a perceptual and a formal region, describe the various changes that this region has undergone throughout its history. Brainstorm examples of other local, national or world regions that have been profoundly transformed over time.
- Imagine you were elected president of a newly formed country. What would you name it? How would you design your region to reflect the things that are important to you and your constituents?

Follow-up Activities

- After farmers overplowed the Great Plains in the process of transforming thousands of square miles of grassland into productive farmland, a severe drought ravaged the area, turning the region into the Dust Bowl. Ask students to identify on a map the states most affected by the prolonged drought and to research the current problem of wind erosion on land in the United States, which damages approximately five million acres each year, and in other countries around the world. Following the "dirty thirties," the United States Department of Agriculture created the Wind Erosion Research Unit (WERU) for conservation planning and erosion prediction. Students should summarize the strategies and goals of the WERU and analyze the effects wind erosion has on one of the world's most important natural resources: soil. Students may learn more about WERU at the following web site: www.weru.ksu.edu/

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