

The Geographer's World

Introduction

Welcome to *Geography Alive! Regions and People*. You have just begun an active, hands on journey into the world around you.

Before going back to look at that photo again, picture yourself in a tiny airplane staring down at the strange landscape below. What is happening down there, you think to yourself. As you look more, your mind is flooded with questions. Where are we? Who lives down there? What are they doing? Why does the land look this way? With such questions tickling your brain, you have just entered the geographer's world.



The Field of Geography

Geography is the study of Earth and its people. It helps us understand how people, places, and environments came to be and how they affect each other.

When geographers look at something on Earth, they ask questions. Where is it? Why is it there? How did it get there? How does it affect the people who are living there? How does it affect the natural

environment in this area? That "something" could be as ordinary as a nearby factory. Or it could be as extraordinary as a distant, fire-belching volcano.



To answer such questions, geographers look at the world in **spatial** terms. This means they look at how things are arranged in space relative to each other. Look at the photograph of the camels below. The first question to pop into a geographer's mind about this photograph would be a spatial one. Of all the places on Earth, where were these camels when this picture was taken? Why were they there?

Physical Geography

Geographers divide their field into two broad branches: physical and human. The word *physical* means relating to things that can be seen, tasted, or felt. **Physical geography** is the study of natural features on the surface of Earth. These are things that can be seen (and sometimes tasted), such as mountains, plants, and animals. They also include things that can be felt more than seen, such as temperature, wind, and weather.

Physical geographers looking at the camel photograph below would be interested in its desert landscape. They would wonder how this place got to be so very dry and what might live in this sea of sand.

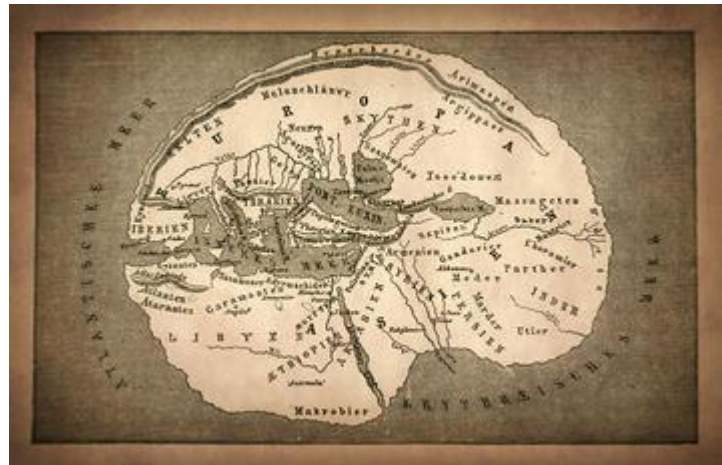
Human Geography

Human geography is the study of people as they have spread across Earth. Human geographers seek to understand who lives where, how, and why. They are also interested in human-made features such as towns, farms, dams, and roads.

Viewing the same camel picture, a human geographer would wonder who is driving those camels. Where did the people come from? Where are they going? And why are they traveling through such a harsh, dry land?

The Geographic Inquiry Process

Geography is a very old field of study. Around 450 B.C.E., a Greek scholar named Herodotus created the first map of the known world. You can see a modern version of it at the bottom of this page. Looking at this map, you may notice two things. First, how much of the world it shows. Second, how much of the world is missing. What you cannot see is how Herodotus created his map. He followed a series of steps known as the *geographic inquiry process*.



Asking Geographic Questions

Herodotus began by asking geographic questions. What is the world like? What lands and seas cover Earth? What peoples does the world contain? Where do they live?

Acquiring Geographic Information

To answer his questions, Herodotus needed geographic information. He traveled widely to see the world. He interviewed other travelers and traders. They told him many tales, some true and some tall, about distant lands. In this way, Herodotus learned about peoples and places he would never see.

Geographers today still travel in search of geographic information. Those travels may take them to nearby places or to distant lands. Like Herodotus, they also look for information gathered by others. This information can often be found in books and on the Internet.

Organizing Geographic Information

Once Herodotus had collected his information, he needed to organize it in some way. There are many ways to organize geographic information. The most common, however, is the one he chose to organize information about all of the places he had learned about: a map.



A map is a way of showing how things are arranged in space. On his map, Herodotus showed what he had learned about the locations of lands, seas, and peoples.

Analyzing Geographic Information

To analyze means to examine something in detail in order to discover more about it. Analyzing geographic information involves seeing patterns and making connections.

As Herodotus analyzed his information, he compared different ways of life. He noticed that Egyptians, for example, did many things “backward” from a Greek point of view. They wrote from right to left, instead of from left to right. They ate outdoors but washed indoors, while the Greeks did just the opposite.

5 Themes of Geography

Location

Location is the particular position of a place or region. This might be the actual location of the place or what the place is near.

These questions can help you identify the location of a region.

- Where is this region located?
- What is it near?

Place

Place refers to the physical features and human aspects of a region.

This question can help you identify the place, or the features in a region.

- What is this region like?

Human-Environment Interaction

Human-environment interaction describes how humans depend on the environment, how they adapt to the environment, and how they change the environment.

These questions can help you identify the human-environment interactions in a region.

- How does this place affect the people living here?
- How do the people who live here affect this place?

Movement

Movement refers to the travel of people, their goods, and their ideas from one place to another.

This question can help you identify the movement of different things throughout a region.

- How do people, goods, and ideas move to, away from, and throughout this region?

Regions

A region is an area that shares physical or human characteristics.

This question can help you identify what makes each region special.

- What features about this region set it apart from other regions?

Fill in the table to show how the five themes of geography connect to your own community.

Location

Place

