

# Physical Geography

In this unit you will learn about general physical geography. The study of the Earth's surface features provides the setting for the human-environmental interactions and for the human geography you will learn about later in the year.



Aerial view of the Amazon Rainforest.

## A Look at the Seven Continents

*Essential Question: What physical features would you find on a tour of the world's continents?*

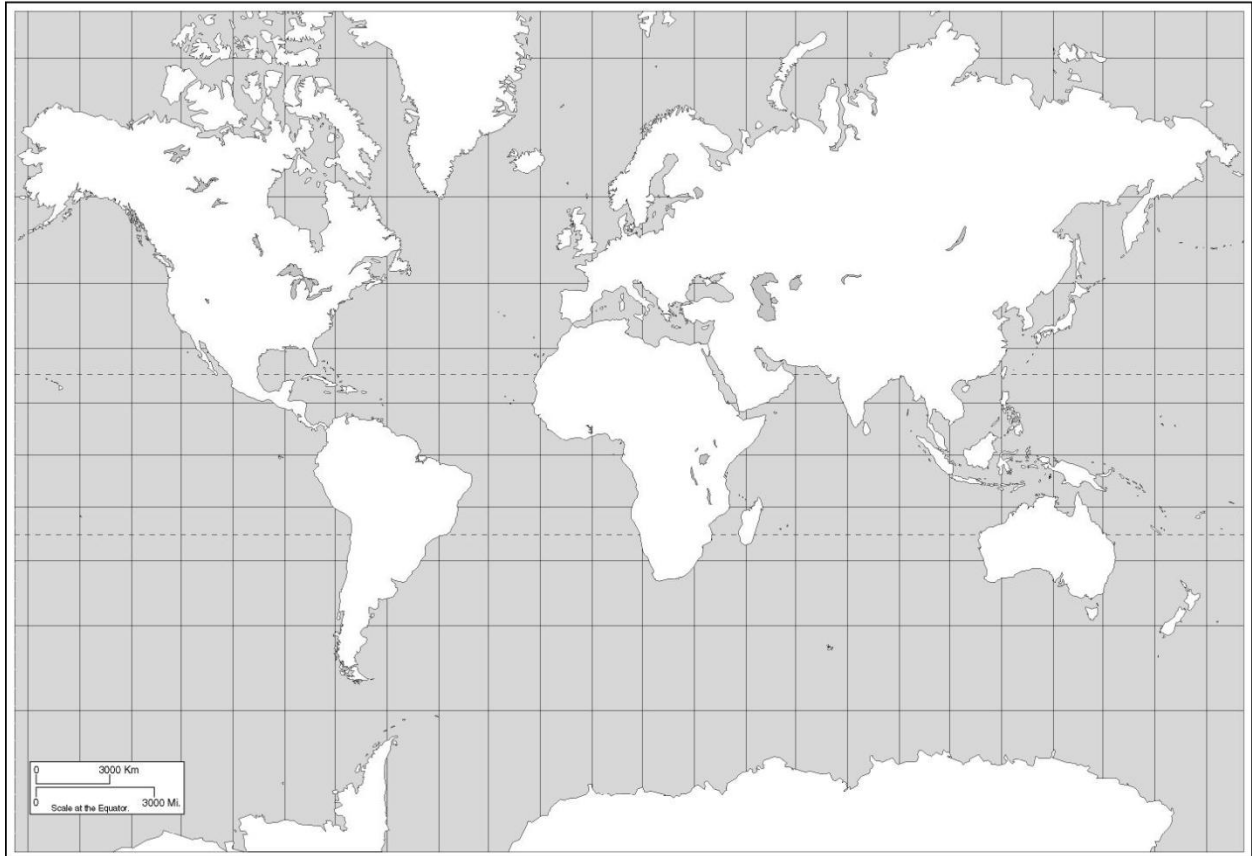
- A. The earth has five oceans:
  - a. Atlantic
  - b. Pacific
  - c. Indian
  - d. Arctic
  - e. Southern
- B. There are seven continents on Earth:
  - a. Africa
  - b. Antarctica
  - c. Asia
  - d. Australia
  - e. Europe
  - f. North America
  - g. South America
- C. Each continent has its own blend of features:
  - a. Mountains
  - b. Deserts
  - c. Plains
  - d. Valleys
  - e. Forests

f. Bodies of water

D. Latitude, landforms and nearness to bodies of water greatly affect climate.

E. Landforms, soil and climate greatly affect the plants and animals that can be found in each place.

MERCATOR PROJECTION OF THE WORLD



Geographic Terms:

1. Continents
2. Sahara Desert
3. Savanna
4. Tropical Rainforest
5. Tundra
6. East Asia
7. Subcontinent
8. Peninsula
9. Himalaya Mountains
10. Regions
11. Physical Region
12. Formal Region

## Earth's Seven Continents

### 1. North America

- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in area
- b. Located in the Western Hemisphere
- c. Stretches from near the North Pole southwards almost to the equator
- d. Central America
  - i. Connects North America to South America
  - ii. Contains less than 1% of the earth's surface, but has 7% of the world's biodiversity-various plants and animals
- e. West Indies
  - i. Made up of a large number of Caribbean Islands
- f. Physical features
  - i. Mountains
    1. Rockies in the west
    2. Appalachian in the east
  - ii. Bodies of water
    1. St. Lawrence River
      - a. Separates parts of the U.S. from eastern Canada
    2. The Mississippi River
      - a. Drains much of the U.S
    3. The Great Lakes: the largest fresh water system on Earth
      - a. Lake Superior
      - b. Lake Michigan
      - c. Lake Huron
      - d. Lake Erie
      - e. Lake Ontario
    4. The Rio Grande
      - a. Separates the U.S. from Mexico
    5. The Panama Canal
      - a. Located in Central America
      - b. Connects the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean
  - iii. Plains
    1. Great Plains: west of the Mississippi
      - a. Contains some of the world's most productive farmland
  - iv. Rainforests
    1. Much of Central America and the islands of the West Indies have warm, humid climates and rainforests.



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**Assignment 1:**

Label the physical map of North America above with the following:

Canada

Great Lakes

Mexico

Mississippi River

Rio Grande

Rocky Mountains (draw ^^^ to represent mountains)

Appalachian Mountains (remember to use symbol ^^^)

West Indies

Atlantic Ocean

Pacific Ocean

Gulf of Mexico

Central America

**2. South America**

- a. Located in the Western Hemisphere, south of Central America
- b. 4<sup>th</sup> largest continent in area
- c. Over 7000 miles in length
- d. Physical features
  - i. Mountains
    1. Andes: longest mountain chain in the world and among the highest in elevation, over 4,500 mi. long, once the basis of the Inca Empire
  - ii. Grasslands and Plains
    1. Mountains and poor soil make much of South America's land unproductive.
    2. Pampas: in Argentina provide LARGE areas of fertile land and soil for growing crops and raising cattle
  - iii. Rainforests
    1. East coast of Central America
    2. Northern part of South America
    3. Amazon Rainforest: largest in the world, in Brazil

iv. Bodies of Water

1. Amazon River: 2<sup>nd</sup> longest in the world
2. Orinoco River
3. Rio de la Plata
4. A large percentage of Brazil's population lives on or near these river systems

v. Climate

1. Much of South America is warm because of its location near the equator
2. Many places, however have cool and even freezing temperatures because of altitude and/or latitude



## Assignment 2:

Using the outline map above, locate and label the following:

Andes Mountains (use ^ symbol for mountains)

Pampas

Amazon River

Equator

Chile

Peru

Brazil

Argentina

Amazon Rainforest

Rio de Janeiro

Caribbean Sea

Pacific Ocean

Atlantic Ocean

### 3. Africa

- a. 2<sup>nd</sup> largest continent in area
- b. Almost three times the size as the U.S.
- c. Physical Features
  - i. Deserts
    1. Sahara:
      - a. World's largest desert
      - b. Separates North and South Africa, largely due to climate and religion
    2. Kalahari Desert
  - ii. Savannas



1. Land where tall, wild grasses grow with some trees



2. The best areas in Africa for growing crops and raising livestock
  3. Most Africans live in the savanna region, along the coasts or along the rivers.
- iii. Tropical Rainforests
    1. In Central and West Africa
    2. Hot and humid
    3. Get 60-100 inches of rainfall per year
  - iv. Mountains and Valleys
    1. Atlas Mountains: northwest edge of Africa
    2. Great Rift Valley: runs through the highlands of Ethiopia to Kenya
  - v. Bodies of Water
    1. Nile River: Longest river in the world 4,150 miles
    2. Lake Victoria
    3. Lake Tanganyika
    4. Lake Nyasa
  - vi. Climate
    1. Much of Africa warm, with hot summers and mild winters
    2. Amount of rain differs greatly



#### 4. Europe

- a. Second smallest continent in land area
- b. Shares the same land mass with Asia
- c. Separated and divided by the Ural Mountains
- d. Physical Features
  - i. Mountains
    1. Alps
    2. Pyrenees: separate Spain and France

3. Apennines: run through the center of Italy
4. Balkans
5. The mountains encouraged Europeans to form many separate nationalities, each with its own language and customs.

ii. Bodies of Water

1. Baltic Sea
2. North Sea
3. Mediterranean Sea
4. Black Sea
5. Danube River
6. Rhine River
7. Loire River
8. Volga River



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5. Asia

- a. The world's largest continent
- b. Composed of several distinct regions
  - i. The Middle East (Southwest Asia)



- 1. Lies at the crossroads of three continents
  - a. Africa
  - b. Europe
  - c. Asia
- 2. Suez Canal: important chokepoint
- 3. Physical features:
  - a. Deserts: Arabian Desert, Syrian Desert
  - b. Bodies of Water:
    - i. Jordan River
    - ii. Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
    - iii. Mediterranean Sea
    - iv. Black Sea
    - v. Red Sea
    - vi. Persian Gulf
  - c. Climate and Resources
    - i. Most of Southwest Asia lies along the equator
    - ii. Generally lacks adequate water
    - iii. Holds about half of the world's known oil reserves
- ii. North and Central Asia
  - 1. Northern Asia is occupied by Russia, the world's largest country in area
    - a. Most of the population is located in European Russia
    - b. Most of the land mass is in Asian Russia
  - 2. Central Asia

- a. Made up of vast amounts of mountains, deserts and steppes (treeless grasslands)
  - 3. Siberia: extremely cold region with forests
  - 4. Tundra: northern most part of Russia
  - 5. Bodies of Water
    - a. Arctic Ocean
    - b. Ob and Lena River
  - 6. Mountains
    - a. Ural Mountains: separate Europe from Asia
    - b. Pamir Mountains: separate Russia from China
  - 7. Climate
    - a. Most of Russia has long, cold winters and short mild summers
- iii. East Asia
  - 1. Includes three important countries
    - a. China (third largest country in the world, after Russia and Canada): the world's most populous nation
    - b. Korea (North and South)
    - c. Japan: consists of four major islands and thousands of smaller ones
  - 2. Bodies of water
    - a. Yangtze and Yellow River: birthplace of early civilizations
  - 3. Mountains
    - a. Himalayan
    - b. Kunlun
    - c. Tianjin
    - d. Plateau of Tibet
    - e. Mount Fuji: extinct volcano and highest point in Japan
  - 4. Deserts
    - a. Gobi: located to the north of China in Mongolia

# East Asia



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iv. South and Southeast Asia

1. South Asia is a subcontinent—a large piece of land smaller than a continent
  - a. The Indian subcontinent looks like a large triangle jutting out into the Indian Ocean
2. Southeast Asia
  - a. Consists of a peninsula and a series of islands.
3. Physical features
  - a. Himalayas
    - i. Highest mountain range in the world
    - ii. Separate India from the rest of Asia
4. Bodies of water
  - a. India
    - i. Indus and Ganges River
  - b. Southeast Asia
    - i. Mekong River
    - ii. Salween River
    - iii. Irrawaddy River
5. Climate
  - a. Warm winters and hot summers
  - b. Monsoons: seasonal winds that bring heavy rains

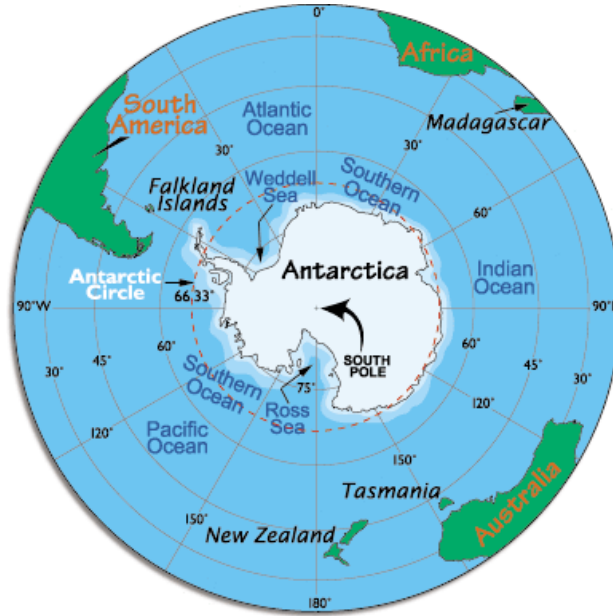
6. Australia

- a. Surrounded by the Indian and Pacific Oceans
- b. Great Barrier Reef: the world's largest coral reef
- c. The only country that is an entire continent



7. Antarctica

- a. World's southernmost continent
- b. Covers the South Pole
- c. Surrounded by the Southern, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean
- d. The coldest, driest and windiest, and has the highest average elevation of all the continents
- e. International research station, used only by scientists



Regions

- Just as historians divide time into distinct time periods, geographers divide the Earth into distinct regions.
- Each region has characteristics that set it apart from other regions.
- Regions can be based on human or physical characteristics.

Physical Regions

Defined as common landforms, soils, climate, vegetation, or animal life.





## Formal Regions

Has clear boundaries and is usually defined by having a common property, such as low rainfall.