THE FIVE THEMES OF GEOGRAPHY—Study Guide

Geography—The study of the earth, its resources (people, land, and animals), and how we use them.

- **Location**
  - Relative Location
  - Absolute Location
- **Place**
  - Human Characteristics
  - Physical Characteristics
- **Human-Environmental Interactions**
  - Humans adapt to the environment
  - Humans modify the environment
  - Humans depend on the environment
- **Movement**
  - People
  - Goods
  - Ideas
- **Regions**
  - Physical Features
  - Climate
  - Economic/Human Activity

**LOCATION**

"Where are we?" is the question that the theme *Location* answers. Location may be absolute or it may be relative. These locations, whether relative or absolute, may be of people or places.

An **absolute location** is a latitude and longitude (a global location) or a street address (local location). Absolute location tells you EXACTLY where a place is located.

Florence, AL is 34°46' North latitude and 87.40' West longitude
Paris, France is 48°51' North latitude and 2.20' East longitude
Marshall Islands are 10°00' North latitude and 165°00' East longitude
NOTE: Lines of latitude run east and west. The Equator is a line of latitude. The earth is divided into the Northern and Southern Hemispheres by the Equator. Lines of longitude run north and south. The Prime Meridian is a line of longitude. The earth is divided into the Eastern and Western Hemispheres by the Prime Meridian. In which two hemispheres is the United States located?

Relative locations are described by landmarks, time, direction or distance from one place to another and may associate a particular place with another. Using directions (north, south, east, west) is usually used in describing relative location.

PLACE

What kind of place is it? What do you think of when you imagine China? Japan? Russia? Saudi Arabia?

Places have both human and physical characteristics.

Physical characteristics include mountains, rivers, soil, beaches, wildlife, soil, and climate. Places have human characteristics also. These characteristics come from changes in the environment due to people, such as buildings, roads, clothing, and food habits.

HUMAN/ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTION

How do humans and the environment affect each other? We change the environment and then sometime Mother Nature changes it back. For example, floods in the mid-West, Hurricane Katrina, and earthquakes and mudslides in California.

Human/Environmental Interaction is divided into three parts:

Humans adapt on the environment (example—wearing clothing that is suitable for summer and winter; rain and shine).
Humans modify the environment (example—by heating and cooling buildings for comfort).
Humans depend to the environment (example—people depend on the Tennessee River for water and transportation).
All places on Earth have advantages and disadvantages for human settlement. One person's advantage may be another person's disadvantage. Some like the excitement of large cities whereas others prefer remoteness. Environment is not just trees, spotted owls, and rain forests. Environment is a feeling. What is the environment of a big city? Boston? Los Angeles? Dallas?

**MOVEMENT**

The movement of people, the import and export of goods, and mass communication have all played major roles in shaping our world. People everywhere interact. They travel from place to place and they communicate. We live in a global village and global economy.

Not only do humans move but also ideas move; fashions move; fads move. What is an example of an idea that moves? Fashion? Fad? How do we depend on people in other places? How would our lives change if our movement options changed? What would happen if we traveled by camel or horse? How do we move from place to place? How do we actually get food?

**REGION**

A region is the basic unit of study in geography. Regions are areas that can be grouped together by a set of things special to that region. Some of the way regions are grouped can be by physical features, climate, government, language, or possibly the landform or economic activity.

IN ADDITION: Study your Five Themes section in your social studies notebook. Be sure you know the regions of the United States (plus major bodies of water and the two countries that border the U.S.).