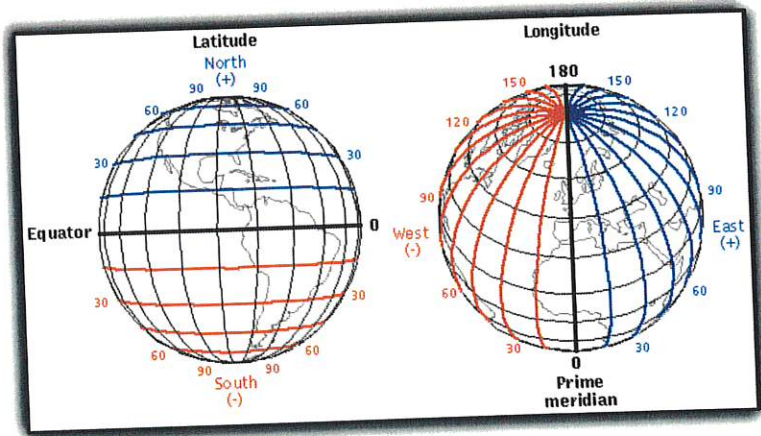


# LOCATION

The first theme of geography is **location** and it tries to explain where a place is located. If you have ever been on a car ride and asked, "Where are we?," then this is the theme that will help you find your answer. However, depending on the kind of answer you want, you would be wise to know the difference between absolute location and relative location.

The absolute location of a place is defined by its lines of latitude and longitude. Latitude and longitude lines are the geographic coordinates that tell us where a place is located on the earth. Everything has an absolute location because nothing can hide from these lines! Latitude lines measure north to south and run horizontally along the earth's surface. Lines of latitude determine how far north or south a location is from the equator, the center line of latitude.



Longitude lines do the opposite; they measure east to west and run vertically along the earth's surface. These lines determine how far east or west a location is from the Prime Meridian. It is important to remember that latitude lines determine how far north or south a location is from the equator, and that longitude lines determine how far east or west a location is from the Prime Meridian. If location falls north of the equator, it is designated by having a symbol for north after it (N). The same goes for south (S), and for east (E) and west (W) along the longitude lines.

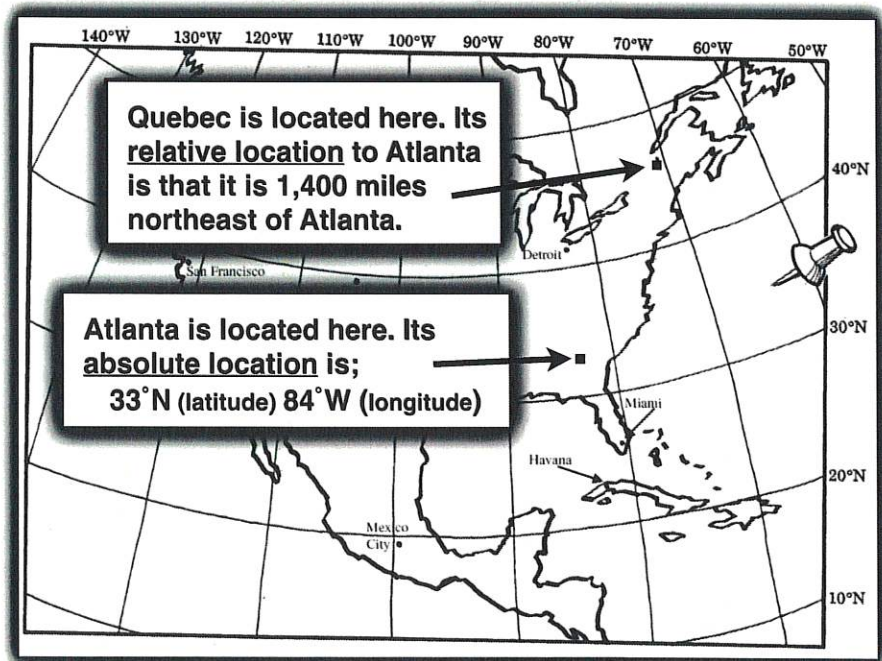
A place's relative location is its location when compared to something else. For example,

"Chicago, IL is 800 miles west of New York City, NY."

"The Grand Canyon is located about 75 miles north of Flagstaff, AZ."

We use relative location to determine how a place is connected to something else. Chicago is connected to New York City because it is 800 miles west of it. The

Grand Canyon and Flagstaff are connected because Flagstaff is 75 miles south. Every location has only one absolute location, but it can have several relative locations based on whom the location is relative to or what other features are around it. For example, Orlando, FL might be 8 miles south of your home, but it is also 3 miles east of where you attended elementary school.



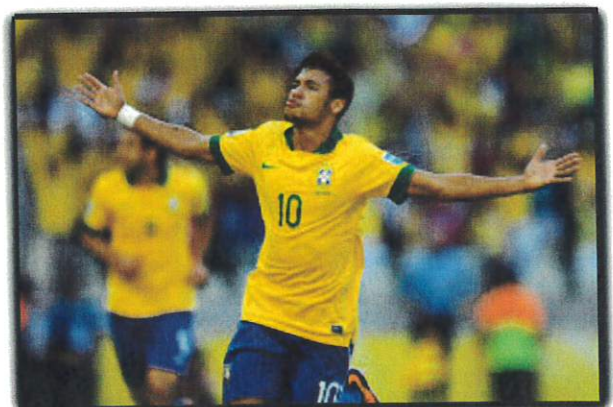
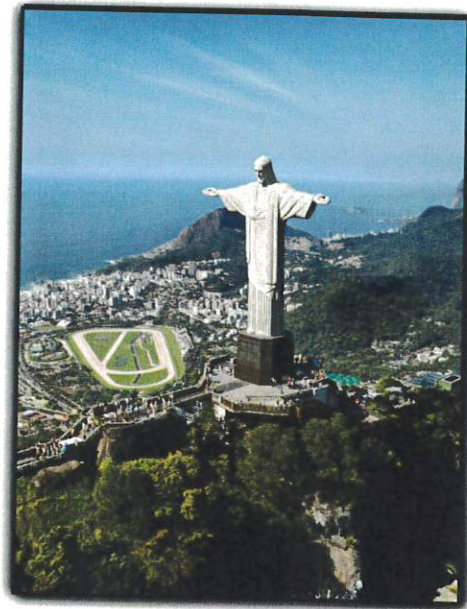


# PLACE

The second theme of geography is **place** and it tries to explain what a location is like or what kind of place it is. What do you think of when you think about China? What do you imagine of when you dream of visiting Italy or Russia? Chances are, whatever comes to your mind are the characteristics that make this place unique. In fact, that is exactly what this theme is about: what are the physical and human characteristics that make a place stand out from anywhere else?

Let's take Brazil for example. Brazil is located in South America, north of Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Brazil contains the very popular Amazon river basin which spans most of northern and western Brazil. Highlands cover most of southern Brazil and are characterized by mountains and plains. Since the equator passes through Brazil in the north, and the Tropic of Capricorn passes through the south, its climate is both tropical and subtropical. Much of Brazil's coastal areas are dotted by lush rainforests that contain thousands of species of trees, plants, animals, and insects. In the highlands, Brazil is known for its large evergreen trees. These are all physical characteristics that we can use to describe what the physical environment (such as rivers, mountains, climate, and wildlife) is like in Brazil.

To fully understand how **place** helps us learn more about geography, we must also examine how human characteristics make a place stand out. Human characteristics are the impact that people have on a place. Brazil has the largest Roman Catholic population of any country, so it is likely you see many parishes as you travel throughout the city. You would certainly see the famous Christ the Redeemer statue that was built in 1931 and adorns the peak of the Corcovado mountain. It would be common to see young children playing fútbol (soccer) in Brazil, since this is the sport of choice by most Brazilians. Music and dancing are also very popular in Brazil, the official language is Portuguese, and the people enjoy a democratic style of government. These are all examples of how humans have impacted life in Brazil, and these are all characteristics that make Brazil unique.

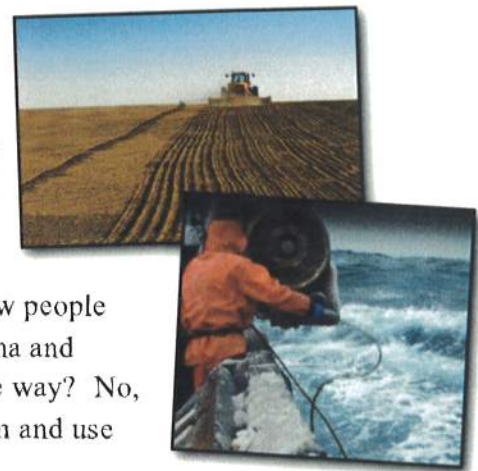




# HUMAN- ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

The third theme of geography is **human-environment interaction**, often called just “**interaction**,” and it tries to explain how humans have modified their environment to fit their needs. Early in earth’s history, the environment was entirely a physical feature; rivers raged, mountains soared, and forests dotted the landscape before humans arrived. Once humans arrived they quickly realized that their environment could be deadly, and they sought solutions to alter it. For example, rivers flooded annually which destroyed crops, homes, and lives, so humans modified their environment by building dams to control water levels. Humans also realized that making changes to their environment could make life easier; for example, building a road through a mountain made travel much faster (and safer) than going all the way around it. This theme seeks to understand how humans depend on their environment, how they adapt to their environment, and how they have modified their environment.

First, humans depend on their environment in many ways. Just look around you - in what ways do people take what the local landscape gives them to ensure their own survival? The environment in Greece is well suited to growing grapes and olives. As a result, local farmers extract olive oil from the olives, turn the grapes into wine, then export these commodities throughout the world. This is an example of how people depend on their environment. Do you think farmers in Indiana and fishermen in Alaska depend on their environment in the same way? No, of course not. People take what their environment gives them and use it to ensure their own survival.



Second, humans are forced to adapt to their environment. If they do not adapt, they will likely not be around very long. For example, the average July temperature in Phoenix, AZ is 104 degrees. How might you adapt to this environment? You certainly would adapt by using an air conditioner in your home, creating shaded areas, and using fans to keep air circulating.

Lastly, humans have modified their environment in a number of ways. This means that humans have changed their environment to fit their needs. The ancient Egyptians built dams to control the Nile River’s flow to prevent flooding, the United States led a joint-effort to carve out the Panama Canal to shorten travel time to the Pacific Ocean, and the ancient Romans created aqueducts to bring fresh water down from nearby mountains in the city.

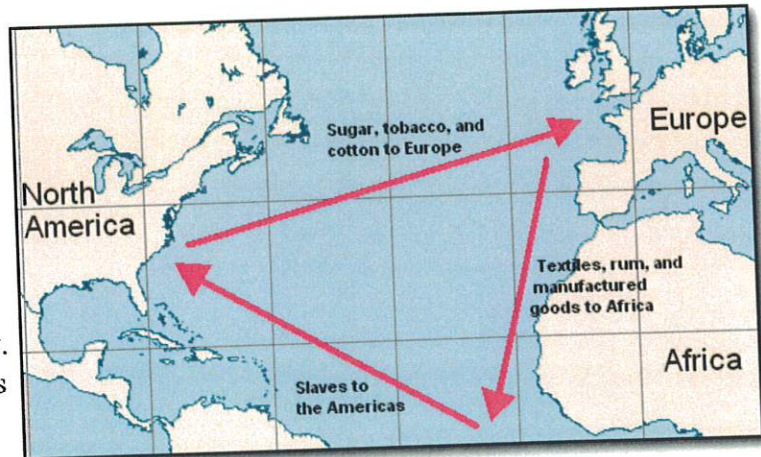


# MOVEMENT

The fourth theme of geography is **movement** and it tries to explain how the movement of people, goods, and ideas impact locations around the world. People can move around the world in a variety of ways - car, boat, airplane, train, etc. Goods can also use these means of transportation. Ideas often move with people as they travel; but ideas are unique in that in today's world ideas can move without having a physical carrier. Ideas can move by using the internet, a newspaper, or even the television.

People have moved throughout all of human history and their movement has impacted geography. For example, when English citizens grew weary of British rule, they established the "New England"

colonies in what is now the northeastern United States. This movement of people brought new ideas (the English language and the Christian faith) and goods (advanced weapons and new clothing styles). Shortly after the colonies were established, the triangular trade was created which forcefully moved people (African slaves) to the Americas in exchange for goods. These enslaved Africans brought their ideas and way of life to an entirely new landscape, which forever changed the geography in the Americas. The same goes for pioneers who traveled west in the 1840s - as settlers traveled to the Oregon country, people brought introduced new ideas and goods to a land that had never seen them before.



Historically, goods have traveled with people. As people traveled, their goods came with them. However, with today's production and transportation methods, goods can travel around the world without a physical person to bring them (except for the shipping company). For example, the company Nike is headquartered in Beaverton, OR.

Do you think people enjoy Nike products outside the state of Oregon? Most of Nike's products are manufactured in India and China - do you think that only people living in India and China have access to purchase goods from Nike? Of course not. The movement of goods such as Nike products has impacted locations around the globe.



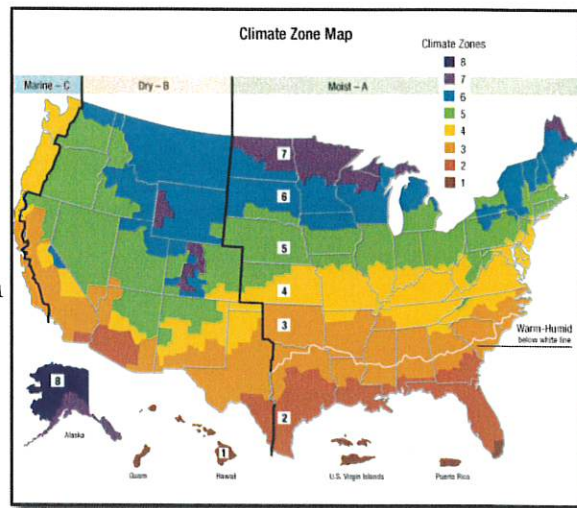
Ideas move just as people and goods do. For example, most of South America speaks Spanish as their official language. However, people in Brazil, the largest country in South America, speak Portuguese. Why? Because Portuguese settlers and their ideas (language) first colonized the area in the late 15th century. Today, Portuguese is still the official language of the country and is the one predominantly spoken by its citizens. With the advent of technology such as the telephone and internet, ideas such as fashion, fads, music and philosophical ideologies are exchanged rapidly between all areas of the globe.



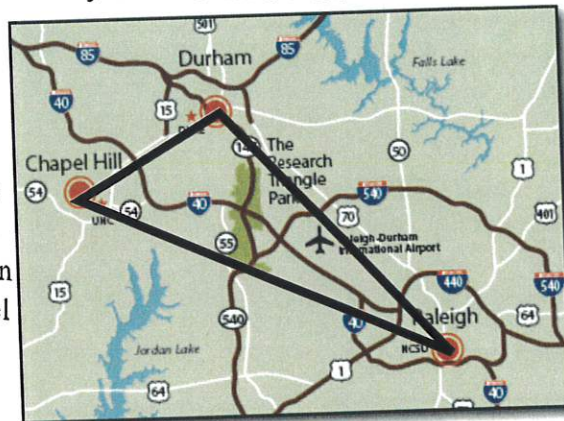
# REGION

The fifth and final theme of geography is **region**, and it tries to explain how and why places are similar. A region defines an area that has unifying characteristics such as climate, industry, people, physical features, vegetation or any other characteristic that can be similar from place to place.

Many places are part of a region based on their climate. In the United States, there are eight different climate zones that divide the country. Like regions all share a similar climate. The climate in the very deep south (Florida to southern Texas) all share a very hot and humid climate for the majority of months out of the year. Also, notice how Alaska is the only state in its region. Remember, to be in a region the area must have a similar characteristic. Since Alaska is so far north (and so far from any of the other states) it makes sense that it would not share a similar climate to any of the other states.



Regions can be much smaller than a collection of states. For example, within the state of North Carolina there is a region called the "Research Triangle." The triangle is not a physical feature, but if you look at a map you could easily draw a triangle between three cities in eastern North Carolina: Chapel Hill, Durham, and Raleigh. Each of these three cities contains a major research university, and they often work in collaboration with each other. Duke University is located in Durham, the University of North Carolina is in Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University is in Raleigh (which is also the state's capital). As a result, many businesses have relocated to this area because of the large numbers of highly-qualified and well-educated graduates that are turned out each year.



The Rust Belt is a region that describes the declining industrial towns of the northeast and along the Great Lakes (Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh) that have lost their factories to cheaper overseas labor or to the south, where taxes are generally cheaper for businesses. On the northern side of San Francisco is a region known as Chinatown; originally founded in 1848 by Chinese immigrants, this enclave still retains its language, customs, social clubs, and places of worship that are unique to the Chinese. While these are just two more examples, regions can be found anywhere. All you need is a unifying characteristic!