Using the Geography Themes

**PREVIEW**

**Words to Know**
- geography
- absolute location
- hemisphere
- latitude
- longitude
- grid system
- relative location
- place
- environment
- movement
- region

**Places to Locate**
- Equator
- Prime Meridian

**Read to Learn . . .**
1. how geographers study the earth.
2. how place and location can mean different things.
3. how people relate to their environment and to each other.

Mansai lives and goes to school in this city. He and his classmates learn about the earth and its geography—the same things you will learn as you read this book.

Our earth is a fascinating place! Look at this photo of Tokyo, Japan, with its modern buildings. Akio

**Geography** is the study of the earth in all of its variety. When you study geography, you learn about the earth's land, water, and plant and animal life. You analyze where people are, how they live, and what they do and believe. You especially look at places people have created and try to understand how and why they are different.

Geographers study the earth as the home of people. Five geographic themes—location, place, human/environment interaction, movement, and region—are used here to help you think like a geographer.

### Location

In geography, *location* means knowing where you are. Every place on the earth can be given an exact position on the globe, which is called its **absolute location**. To help geographers mark the absolute location of a place, a network or grid of imaginary lines is placed on the earth.

**Equator** The Equator is an imaginary line that circles the earth midway between the North Pole and the South Pole. It divides the earth into two
hemispheres, or halves. The Northern Hemisphere includes all of the land and water between the Equator and the North Pole. The Southern Hemisphere includes all of the land and water between the Equator and the South Pole.

**Latitude and Longitude** Other imaginary lines called lines of latitude, or parallels, circle the earth parallel to the Equator. They measure distance north or south of the Equator in degrees. The Equator is designated as 0°, and the poles are at 90° North and 90° South.

Lines of longitude, or meridians, run from the North Pole to the South Pole. They are numbered in degrees east or west of a starting line called the Prime Meridian, which is at 0° longitude. On the opposite side of the earth from the Prime Meridian is the International Date Line, or 180° longitude.

Lines of latitude and longitude cross one another in the form of a grid system. If you know a place's exact latitude north or south of the Equator, and its exact longitude east or west of the Prime Meridian, you can easily mark the absolute location of that place on a map or globe.

**Relative Location** You also can locate a place by finding out how far and in what direction it is from somewhere else. This is called relative location because you are learning where a place is in relation to another place.

**Place**

**Place** has a special meaning in geography. It means more than where a place is. It also describes what a place is like. That is, what features make this location similar to or different from another place?

These features may be physical characteristics, such as land shape, plants, animal life, or climate. They also may be characteristics of people and the things they have created, including their language, clothing, buildings, music, or ways of making a living.
Human/Environment Interaction

Wherever humans have lived or traveled, they have changed their environment, or natural surroundings. People have blasted through mountains to build roads, cut down forests, built houses, and used grasslands to graze herds. Some human actions have damaged the natural environment, and some have not.

The environment influences the way people live. People adapt their lives to some environmental conditions. To live in a cold climate, for example, people must invent ways to protect themselves and make a living in the cold. To live in a place that is dry, people have to develop ways to provide water.

Movement

The theme of movement helps geographers understand the relationship among places. Movement describes how people in one place make contact with people from another place. People, ideas, information, and products are constantly moving around the world. They travel instantly by telephone, computer, or satellite, or go more slowly by car, train, or ship.

When people in one place want something that is not found in their area, they trade with people in areas that have what they want. People in Japan, for example, may listen to music from the United States, while people in Canada eat bananas shipped from Central America.

Region

Geographers often think about the world in regions, or areas that share some common characteristics. Regions can be quite small—your county, city, or neighborhood can be a region. They also can be huge—the western United States is a region.

An area can be called a region because of its physical features such as landscape or climate. A region also can be determined by human traits such as language, political boundaries, religion, or the kinds of work the people do.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

REVIEWING TERMS AND FACTS
1. Define the following: geography, absolute location, hemisphere, latitude, longitude, grid system, relative location, place, environment, movement, region.

2. LOCATION What is the starting line for determining longitude?

3. PLACE What two kinds of features are used to describe place?

MAP STUDY ACTIVITIES
4. Turn to the world map on page 24. What large land area is both west of the Prime Meridian and entirely north of the Equator?