Sixth Grade Social Studies

Source: https://pixabay.com/static/uploads/photo/2014/01/04/07/40/earth-238368_640.jpg

World Geography and Global Issues

As the world gets more connected, nearly all Americans are affected by world events. The global impact of events is related to political and cultural forces but also stems from the powerful intersection of an increasingly global economy. Traditional human concerns such as the use and allocation of scarce resources, leadership and decision making, and how to live peacefully in diverse groups are visible across the globe. Using a geographic lens to explore global events allows us to compare how humans in different places address similar issues. It also enables us to study broad patterns of human behavior and the global consequences of those actions. Knowledge, understanding, and application of geographic content and perspectives are essential to comprehend the causes and effects of physical and human events that occur on the earth's surface.

Across the world today and throughout human history, people have faced similar problems in their communities, countries, and regions. Many of the ways in which people have addressed these problems have roots in social studies. We will be exploring how common global issues related to geography, history, economics, and government issues play out in different places across Earth. Differences in the scope and severity of the problem, as well as potential solutions are often attributed to the physical geography and resources available to people, the economic and political systems involved, and the rich history of the people living in a region. Sometimes, the different resources available to solve a similar problem result in different solutions. Often, the history of a region continues to influence current issues or problems. Since economic systems and governments vary across the world, the tools and processes available to solve similar problems may differ as well.

The goal of this course is to explore common issues that face humanity. Despite the wide variation in geography, culture, history, and political and economic systems, the bond we share – as members of humanity – enable us to learn from each other as we address global issues. After all, we share the planet, so developing a global perspective will benefit our collective future.

This course takes a global approach to world geography. It is designed to challenge you to think globally in exploring public issues and to analyze global or cross regional patterns and interactions. Such thinking and analyses are essential for you to be successful in an increasingly flat, interconnected world.

This course contains the following units of study:

- Foundations of World Geography
- The World in Spatial Terms (Physical Geography)
- Population and Migration
- Culture
- Human-Environment Interactions
- Economics and World Trade
- Civics, Government, and Global Politics

Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/55524309@N05/5377717047

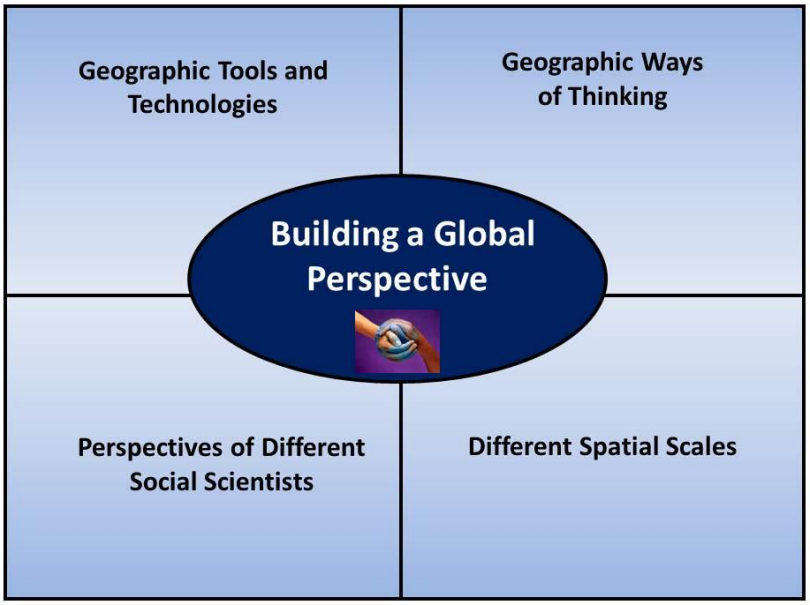
Unit 1: Foundations of World Geography

Below are three questions we will be investigating in this unit. Read the questions and think about what you already know that can help you understand each one.

Focus Questions

1. How can the five themes of geography help us understand our world?
2. How can the approaches and perspectives of different social scientists help us understand our world?
3. What makes an issue or problem global?

This unit will introduce you to the study of geography. While you have probably explored geographic concepts before, this course focuses on a global perspective. That means we are going to investigate the geography of the world. Since the world is rather big, we are going to start with some foundational ideas.



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What is geography?

Whether you know it or not, geography is a part of your every-day life. From the foods you eat to the type of home you live in, geography affects your life. Geography is the social studies field that investigates the earth and the ways humans interact with it. An expert on geography is called a geographer.

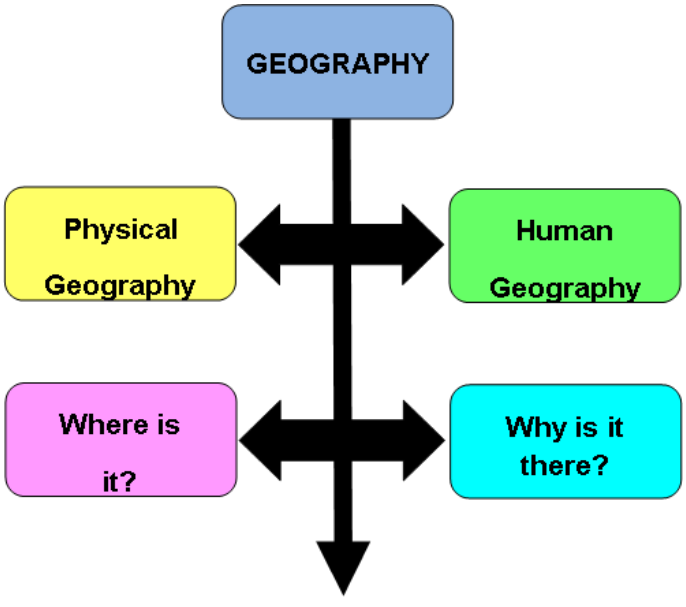
Geographers are social scientists who study Earth's physical features, how people use, modify, or adapt to those features, and the consequences of those actions. Geographers work in many different areas such as education, disaster response, city and county planning, community development, environmental management and more. As we begin our examination of geography, we will start by exploring two questions about places that may be familiar to you: "Where is it?" and "Why is it there?"

Physical and Human Geography

Below is a list of definitions for geography from different sources:

- *Geography is the study of the earth as the home of people.*
- *Geography is the study of the patterns and processes of human (built) and environmental (natural) landscapes, where landscapes comprise real and perceived space.*
- *Geography studies the relationship between people and their environment.*
- *Geography is the study of humans interacting with their environment including the physical environment, the built environment and socially constructed spaces.*
- *Geography is a spatial perspective of all human and physical phenomena.*
- *Geography is the study of the interaction between people and environments.*
- *Geography is the study of relationships between humans and their environment by emphasizing a spatial and environmental perspective at a variety of scales.*

Many of the definitions refer to physical features of the earth and to people. This is because there are two different areas of geography: physical geography and human geography. *Physical geography* is the study of the natural characteristics of Earth. This includes the study of landforms, bodies of water, vegetation, and climate. *Human geography* is the study of the ways people interact with the earth. When geographers investigate how



Graphic.SS0601.1. MC3 Project

humans interact with the earth, such as building a bridge over a waterway or a large building in a city, then it involves human geography. Some other investigations that fall under human geography deal with culture, migration, and population.

A common way to learn about geography is by studying small places first and then expanding to larger regions. This is known as "expanding environments." When you learned about your local community, you probably used maps that enabled you to see human and physical features of your community. Similarly, when you explored Michigan in elementary school, you probably explored the natural beauty of Michigan – its physical features such as Pictured Rocks, Sleeping Bear Dunes, and the Great Lakes. From bridges to buildings, Michigan also has many human features. Below are several geographic features found in Michigan.

Indian Head, Pictured Rocks, Michigan

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictured_Rocks_National_Lakeshore

Sleeping Bear Dunes, Michigan

Source: http://www.nps.gov/slbe/planyourvisit/psscenicdrive.htm

Satellite view of the Great Lakes

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Lakes_region_as_viewed_from_the_Moderate_Resolution_Imaging_Spectroradiometer_on_NASA%E2%80%99s_Aqua_satellite_on_28_August_2010_at_1330_Central_Daylight_Time.png

The Mackinac Bridge

Source: http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9618_11016-273281--,00.html

The Capitol Building in Lansing

Source: http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/michigan/files/styles/related/public/201103/thetoad_2.jpg

One of the many lighthouses in Michigan

Source: https://www.unc.edu/~rowlett/lighthouse/miwl.htm as posted in White Shoal Light, Lake Michigan, January 200.
Flickr Creative Commons photo by C.W. Bash

Spatial Scales

The world is a pretty big place. Spatial scales are the different lenses geographers and others use to explore the world. By breaking the world into smaller chunks and zooming in on specific places, we can see more details about the place.

It may help to think of the different spatial scales as working like different camera lenses. Sometimes you want to zoom in and see the faces of the people in the picture. At other times, you want to see the scenery around the people in the photograph. When you zoom out, you might not see the freckles on some of the faces, but you can see where the people are in relation to their environment.

The same is true with spatial scales. We can zoom into a town and see the streets and houses. However, if we zoom out, we would be able to see where that town is in relation to the state, county, or continent. We will be using different spatial scales – local, regional, interregional, and global – to investigate our world.

The pictures below show Michigan at different spatial scales.

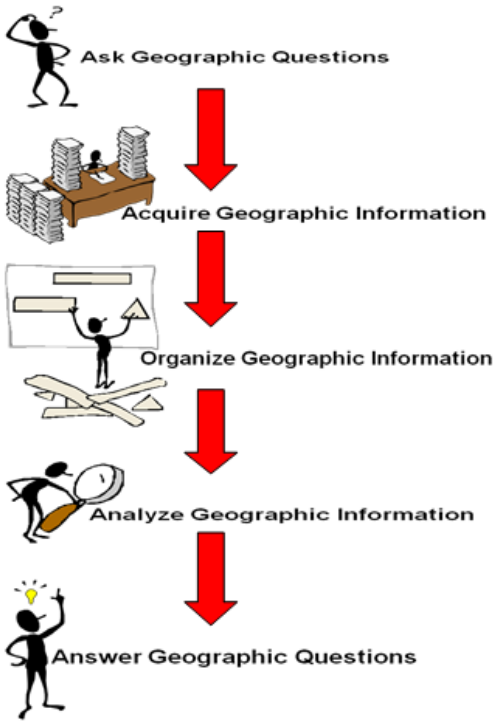
Sources: http://www.city-data.com/city/Detroit-Michigan.html; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_map_of_the_United_States.PNG; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Relief_map_of_USA_Michigan.png; https://openclipart.org/detail/29983/globe-with-borders

Advancements in Geography

The field of geography continues to evolve. Advances in technology allow geographers to know more than ever before about our planet and how we interact with it. As geographers use new technology in their investigations, they are able to learn more about our world and how we live, work, and play there.

What is geographic inquiry?

Understanding the way in which social scientists investigate problems will help you conduct your own investigations about problems or issues facing your community and our world. Geographers use an inquiry process to answer geographic questions. While the inquiry process in general applies to all social scientists, the types of questions geographers ask, the evidence they use, and their ways of knowing differ from other social scientists. By combining the perspectives of different social scientists, we get a more complete picture of our world and our place in it.



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Geographic inquiry is a method used for investigating geographic problems and issues. Similar to science, this process has steps that must be completed in the proper order. First, geographers must **ASK** geographic questions. Typically, geographers ask questions about where and why certain human and environmental conditions exist. Second, they must **ACQUIRE** geographic information. In this step, geographers use maps, geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), online mapping, observations, surveys, photographs, mathematical models, satellite images, environmental data, and other geographic tools to gather information. Sometimes, gathering geographic information can lead to more questions, which will require you to gather even more information.

Once all of the information is gathered, the third step that geographers take is to **ORGANIZE** the information. Organizing the information may include the creation of maps, charts, diagrams or written documents. This requires re-reading the information and grouping similar information together. At this point, geographers may also see that they need to revise their question, have additional questions, or need more information. As with all inquiry and research, it is important to reflect on what information is found and consider how to refine the initial question and research.

The fourth task is to **ANALYZE** the geographic information. To look deeper into the information, geographers search for patterns and connections within the data. Analysis allows geographers to make predictions and inferences in order to answer the initial geographic questions. Sometimes, however, an analysis can raise new questions for investigation. If so, more research and organization may be needed.

Finally, geographers will **ANSWER** the questions by drawing conclusions from the data they have collected and organized. However, it is not enough for a geographer to simply find an answer. They also may make recommendations for action. An important part of the geographic inquiry process is communicating to others in order to implement an action plan. Geographers communicate orally and in writing. The writing may be in either print or electronic media.

Throughout the year we will employ the geographic inquiry process as we study global problems and issues. Remember, geographers **ASK, ACQUIRE, ORGANIZE, ANALYZE** and **ANSWER** geographic questions.

What Tools and Technologies Do Geographers Use?

Geographers use a variety of tools and technologies in investigating geographic questions. Maps and globes both represent the earth, but each has its own advantages and disadvantages. A Global Positioning System (GPS) can help geographers answer the question of "Where is it?" Aerial photographs and satellite images can help geographers understand how places look today and how they have changed over time. Graphs, charts, and diagrams provide geographers with a means for recording, organizing, or categorizing the data they collect to find patterns and trends.

Once a geographer identifies an issue or question such as "Why is a river polluted?" he or she needs to acquire geographic information that can be helpful in answering the question. In gathering this data, geographers use a variety of tools and technologies.

- What geographic tools do you think geographers use?
- What geographic tools have you used?

Maps

Maps are probably the most common tool used to answer geographic questions. They provide a visual description or portrayal of the earth or parts of the earth. Maps can reflect a great variety of spatial scales. For instance, maps can represent a place such as a town, a country, or even as large as a continent.

Maps illustrate information about geographic areas, and every map has at least one purpose. For example, some maps show the natural features of a region such as rivers, lakes, or mountains. Maps may also show human features as well. Some common human characteristics found on maps include roads, railroad tracks, airports, or homes. Since maps can be used to represent a variety of information, it is important to ask, "What is the mapmaker trying to show me?" when first looking at a map. By orienting yourself to the map's purpose, it is easier to read and make sense of the information on the map.

Maps have both advantages and disadvantages. One big advantage of maps is that they are convenient to carry. Another advantage is that maps can be made to represent a variety of different features about a place. However, maps do have a major limitation. Can you think of what this may be?

Let's try an experiment. Locate a cup or a mug and place it on the floor beside your feet. Now stand over the cup. How would you draw what the cup looks like? Now put the cup on a table in front of you, viewing it at eye level. Think about how the cup looks now. If you draw the cup from this perspective, would your two drawings look different? It is likely that the drawings are different because you viewed the cup from two very different perspectives, and each drawing represents a different view of the cup. Since the cup is three-dimensional, it is impossible to represent it in two dimensions, such as a drawing, without losing some information.

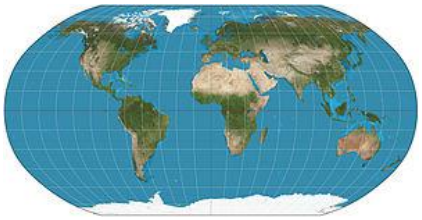
This is the same problem people face in creating maps. Earth is round and three dimensional, but maps are flat and two-dimensional. The only way to represent the spherical, three-dimensional earth on a flat, two-dimensional map is by stretching or distorting certain areas. Different cartographers (map makers) have used different ways, or projections, to represent the earth (a round three dimensional object) on a map. In doing so, some information on the map becomes inaccurate. Geographers

refer to these inaccuracies as distortions. Some different aspects of a map that may be distorted include distance, direction, or the size and shape of land and water bodies. What distortions do you see in the maps below?

Mercator Projection

Source: http://www.public.asu.edu/~aarios/resourcebank/maps/page10.html

Robinson Projection



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robinson_projection

Peters Projection

Source: http://www.petersmap.com/

Globes

Image Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GEO_Globe.jpg

Like the earth, a globe is a round three dimensional object. As such, it is easier to represent the earth on a globe without distortions. A spherical, three-dimensional representation of Earth is helpful because it will not have the distortions that a flat, two-dimensional map has.

Although globes may be a better way to represent the earth, they are not always convenient. You probably would never pack a globe in your car on a family vacation. Globes do not fit nicely in a vehicle's glove compartment. Another problem with globes is that they represent a large a very large area. As a result, the spatial scale is small and it is difficult to see details. Globes typically will not contain the details necessary for most travelers, such as street names or towns.

Graphs, Charts, and Diagrams

Oftentimes, the information helpful to a geographer isn't available on a map or a globe. Instead this data may be represented in another format, such as a graph. Useful types of graphs might include line graphs, pie graphs, and bar graphs. Sometimes, the information might be extensive enough that the best way to represent it is in the form of a chart. Other information may be so complex that a

diagram might be the best representation of the information. Since graphs, charts, and diagrams can serve different purposes, geographers use their best judgment in determining which format to use.

Aerial Photographs and Satellite Images

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Positioning_System

When it is important to have very current or accurate information, photographs taken from a bird's eye or aerial view might be just what a geographer needs. If a shopping center is planned to be built near a wetland area, it would be helpful to see the extent of the wetlands through an aerial photo. A satellite image is simply a picture taken by one of the thousands of satellites that are circling Earth. These satellite images can provide very valuable information that would be difficult to get any other way. For instance, during Hurricane Sandy, meteorologists used satellite imagery to track the storm in order to accurately predict the storm's intensity and where and when it would reach land. This way, thousands of people were able to prepare for the storm.

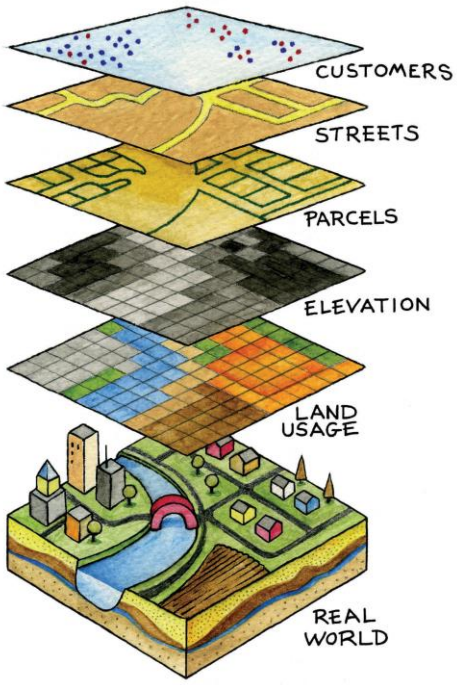
Global Positioning System

Commonly referred to as GPS, global positioning systems use a network of satellites that continually orbit Earth to collect information about the location of a receiver, like your cell phone. The satellites send the receiver's exact position (latitude, longitude, elevation, and time) to Earth. This information is displayed on the receiver. Many cars and cell phones today have GPS systems. Imagine you are an archeologist trekking through a remote area. You are in search of a site that was previously spotted in a satellite image. GPS equipment would be very helpful for you to find the exact place you are looking to begin your exploration!

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NDrive_GPS.jpg

GIS

A geographic information system (GIS) integrates hardware, software, and data for capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. GIS merges cartography, numerical data, and computer science technology. It uses computers to create representations of places and allows the user to layer information about those places. GIS allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, globes, reports, and charts.



Source: http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/geographic-information-system-basics/s05-03-geographic-information-systems.html

Let's return to our example of a building a shopping center. Once a location is proposed, GIS technology can incorporate information such as underground water and soil types, as well as sewer and power lines. GIS allows us to add surface information that may include roads, buildings, and natural features on the earth's surface for that location. Other statistical information such as people's income, family size, and ethnic information can also be layered to provide a detailed picture of the location.

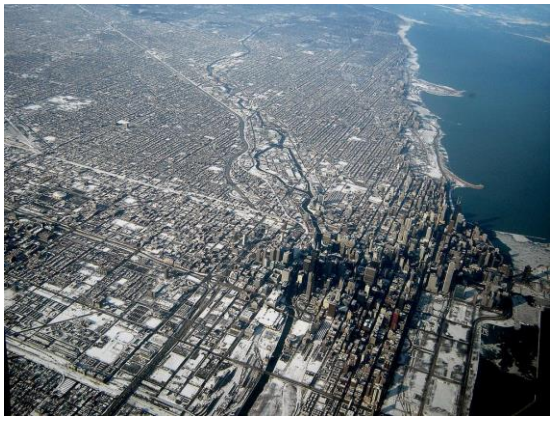
Applying Geographic Tools to Places

Every area on Earth can be categorized one of three ways: rural, urban, or suburban. In *rural* areas, people do not live close to each other. There are few buildings, and homes are far apart from each other. There is a lot of open space or farmland. People who live in rural areas are often referred to as living in the country.

Source: http://wikimapia.org/8061069/Golestan-Province

In *urban* areas, there are many more people living closely together. Buildings are also close together, and there is minimal open land. People who live in urban areas are often said to live in cities. Below are urban areas that may be familiar to you.

Downtown Detroit
Source: http://www.adrenalinedance.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/detroit-michigan.jpg



Ariel View of Chicago
Source: http://scienceheathen.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/20121212-153303.jpg

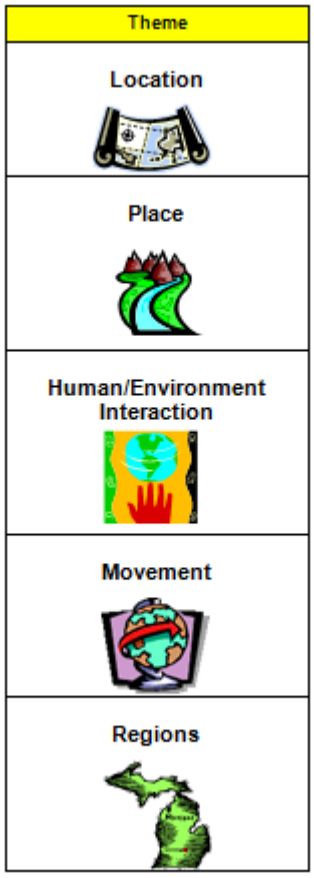
In *suburban* areas, there are fewer buildings than in urban areas, but there is still open land as well. These are usually called "satellite" or "bedroom" towns because they are close to larger cities, and many people who live in suburban areas commute to the nearby urban area for work.

Source:
https://www.flickr.com/photos/49980618@N08/5308148218/

Suburbs became popular with the invention of the automobile. Before that, suburban residents had to walk from the train to their homes. Houses were located a reasonable distance from train stations, and homes were built closer to each other. Today, suburban areas are more spread out and often characterized by specific zones for residential, commercial, and sometimes industrial use, instead of a single downtown core.

The Five Themes of Geography

Geographers use the five themes of geography to organize information in their study of Earth. The five themes are: *location, place, human-environment interaction, movement* and r*egions*. Each of these themes focuses on different types of questions about an area under investigation. Since geographers use questions or problems to drive their investigations, the five themes of geography is a useful framework or thinking tool for organizing geographic questions. We will use the five themes as we investigate questions related to world geography and global issues.



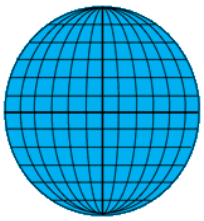
Source: MC3 Project SS060104

Location

The theme of location asks the central geographic question, *"Where is it?"* Geographers answer this question in two different ways, using absolute and relative location. Perhaps you have used your addresses, such as your home address, as a way of locating places. This is using an absolute location. For example, let's pretend that your school's address is 222 Bluebird Lane. That address tells you exactly where the school is on Bluebird Lane.

However, not all places on Earth have addresses. Addresses only work when there is a street and people have put a building at a particular place on that street. Consider this: How would you answer the question, *"Where is it?"* when discussing the highest point in the Andes Mountains? There are no streets and buildings to use for an address. It would be impossible to give a street address to pinpoint the location.

Since not all locations have a street address, geographers use a more complex form of absolute location to answer the question, *"Where is it?"* They use a grid or coordinate system to identify the exact or precise place. By placing a grid over the earth, geographers can use the grid to pinpoint exact locations, such as the highest point of the Andes Mountains.


Source: Global Grid from the MC3 Project

Relative location, on the other hand, gives a general idea of where a place is located in relation to another place. Relative location uses other places around the target location to answer the question, *"Where is it?"* Some examples of using relative location are listed below:

- Michigan is north of Ohio.
- My street is two blocks after the grocery store on the corner.
- California is on the west coast of the United States. It is next to the Pacific Ocean. It is north of Mexico and south of Oregon.

People use both relative and absolute location to answer the question, "Where is it?"

Place

The geographic theme of place asks the question, *"What is it like there?"* To answer this question, geographers examine both natural and human characteristics of an area. *Natural characteristics* are the physical features that exist on Earth. Some examples include landforms such as mountains, valleys, and plains, as well as bodies of water like oceans, rivers, and lakes. Climate and vegetation in a place also are natural characteristics. *Human characteristics* refer to the people living in an area and the man-made features they put there. For example, the Mackinac Bridge is a man-made feature in Michigan. Homes, buildings, and roads are other human characteristics in your community. When people describe a place, they tend to use both natural and human characteristics.

The Mackinac Bridge is a human characteristic.

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Mackinac_Bridge_Sunset.jpg

Source: http://www.cocorahs.org/Media/images/composite-MI-1100w.png

So, what is it like in Michigan? Michigan is a state that is made up of two peninsulas. A peninsula land mass that is surrounded by water on all but one side. The water bodies that surround Michigan's two peninsulas are known collectively as the Great Lakes. Michigan's two peninsulas are joined by a bridge over the Straits of Mackinac. The Lower Peninsula has more people and has sandy beaches on its western shore. The Upper Peninsula varies from swampland in the northeast near Lake Superior, to low mountains in the west. Michigan's capital city is Lansing. Other major cities include Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint, and Ann Arbor. While much of the land in Michigan is used for farming, manufacturing plants exist near major and mid-sized cities. How would you describe your city or town? What human and natural characteristics would you identify?

<u>Human-Environment Interaction</u>

The third theme of geography is human-environment interaction. The question that drives this theme is, *"How do people interact with the environment?"* People interact with their environment in one of three ways. They can use, modify, or adapt to the environment.


Pictured Rocks National Park

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Head_Pictured_Rocks_Michigan.JPG

People use the environment without changing it by enjoying the natural beauty of a place. Swimming in Lake Michigan or hiking among the cliffs, forests, and beaches of Pictured Rocks are some examples of how people use the environment in Michigan.

Sometimes, however, when people use the environment, they end up changing it. In Michigan, we used our vast forests to build houses and the sand around our shorelines to make glass for automobiles. A whole mining industry developed in the Upper Peninsula because of the rich mineral deposits found there. In all of these examples, people ended up modifying the environment by their actions.

Other times, people modify their environment in order for it to serve a different purpose. For instance, in southeastern Michigan, some lakes are man-made. By draining the surrounding swamplands, people were able to use those areas for building.

Children adapt to their environment by wearing warm clothes in the winter.

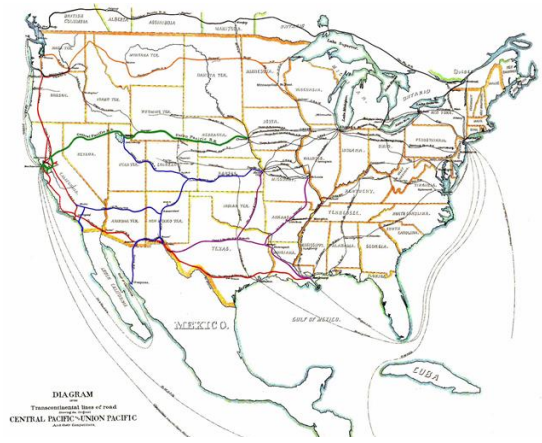
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ski_suit

People also adapt to their environment in a variety of ways. If you live in Michigan, you probably have experienced very cold winters. As a result, homes are built with insulation and heating elements. We also wear warm coats and hats in the winter. How might people in Florida adapt to their climate differently than we do in Michigan?

Human-environment interactions can have positive and negative consequences for the environment. While attention is often given to negative consequences of human-environment interactions, such as factory pollution, humans can have positive effects on their environment. Sometimes, people plant trees to replace those lost in a fire. In recent years, experts and policy makers in Michigan have sought ways to prevent invasive species such as Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes from the Illinois River. Any modification to the environment to prevent Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes would be considered a positive consequence of human-environment interaction (unless, of course, the modification causes other problems).

Movement

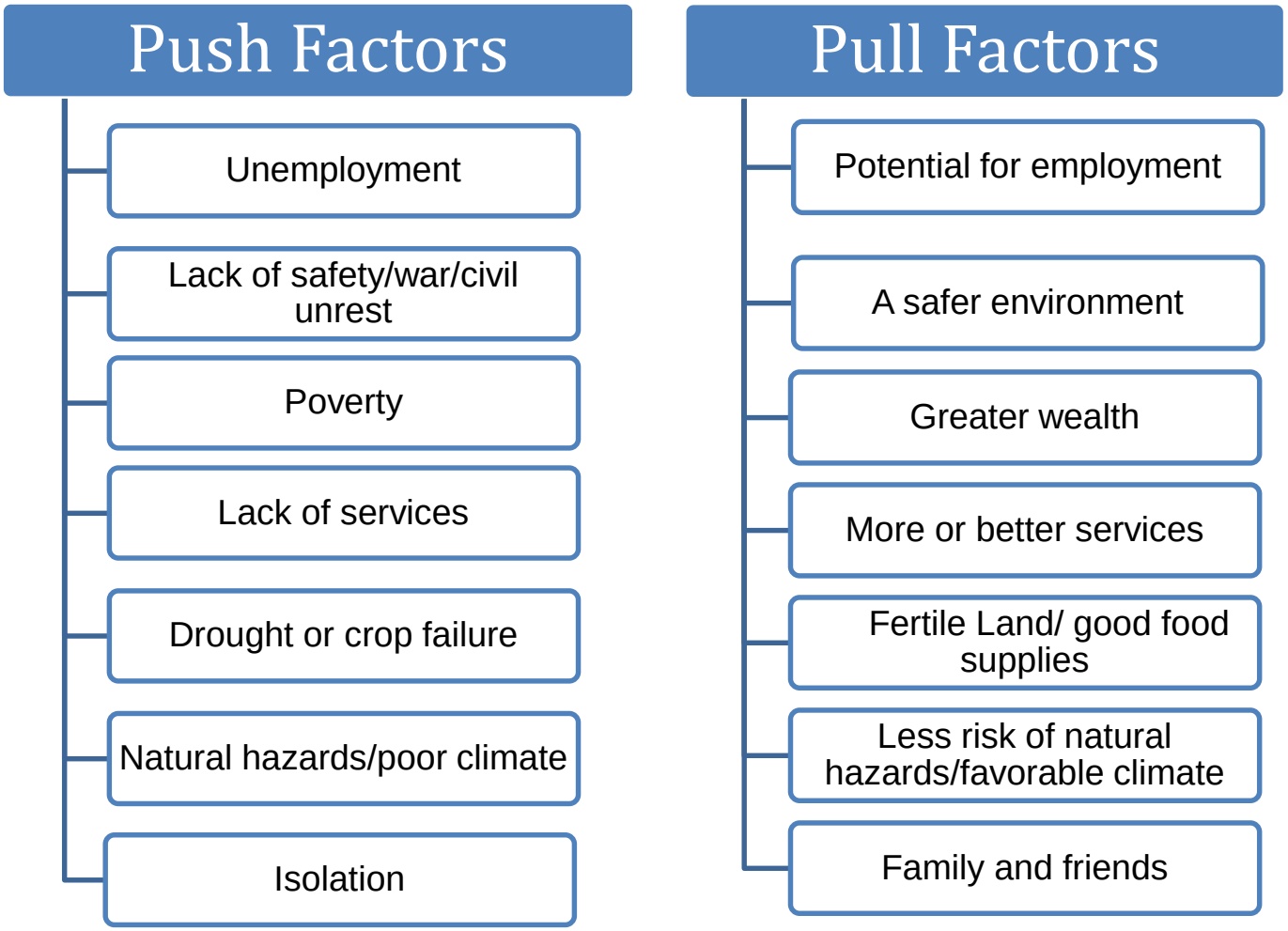
When geographers investigate movement, they ask the question, *"How is this place connected to other places?"* In doing so, they explore how and why people, goods, and ideas move in and out of a particular place. Transportation, migration, communication, and trade all fall within the theme of movement.



Railroads provide a way to move people and goods.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcontinental_railroad

One type of movement is called *migration*. Migration occurs when people relocate from one town to another. In exploring why people migrate, social scientists consider both push and pull factors. A *push factor* is a force that drives people away from a particular location. This could be for a variety of reasons including the lack of a job, lack of freedom, or poor climate. A *pull factor* is the force that draws people to a new location. A better job, more affordable housing, or other family members living in a certain location can act as pull factors. The chart below shows several push and pull factors of migration.



Not only do people move, but goods move as well. Whether your school is in the middle of the Manistee National Forest area or located in the center of a major city like Lansing, your food supplies are delivered to your school. The computers in your computer lab were also brought in from other places -- perhaps in your state, elsewhere in the country, or even from overseas! These important deliveries are examples of the movement of goods. People use different ways to transport goods from one location to another such as airplanes, ships, trains or trucks. Throughout history, people have created transportation routes to move goods.

Another question about movement that geographers investigate involves ideas. When you watch television, listen to the latest song by your favorite recording artist, or watch a movie, you are participating in the movement of ideas. Ideas move when they are transferred to others. Technology continues to make communication easier and more efficient. How do you communicate with others in a different location? What types of communication systems do you use?

Source: http://stockarch.com/files/11/04/laptop_and_user.jpg

Region

The fifth theme of geography is region. When geographers investigate this theme, they ask the question, *"How might one or more common geographic characteristics help us understand this place?"* Regions are defined by common characteristics that hold an area together. They can be very small, like the neighborhood in which you live, or they can be much larger, like the continents of the world. The name given to a region usually provides a clue as to the common characteristic upon which the region is based. Using regions can help us see the connections between places around the globe.

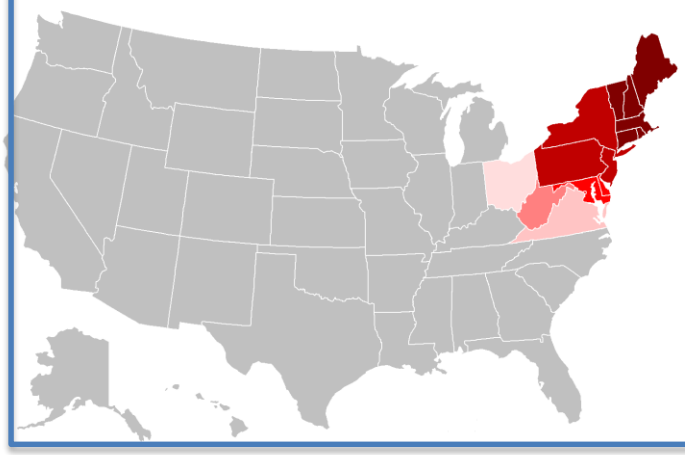
To better understand the concept of regions, let's consider a grocery store and how it is organized. For instance, there is a cereal aisle and a fresh produce section. Stores are usually pretty good at grouping like items together. That is what regions are all about. A geographic example of regions is the Great Lakes region. This is a Canadian-American region that includes the eight states in the United States that border the Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio,

Pennsylvania and Wisconsin), as well as the Canadian province of Ontario. The characteristic that all of these places have in common is that they border the Great Lakes.

Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_USA_highlighting_Great_Lakes_region.png

Geographers use the theme of regions to help them focus on a particular area by asking, *"How can the place be divided into regions?"* Michigan can be divided into a number of smaller parts. Geographers do this by using common characteristics for classification. One simple way to divide Michigan into regions is by separating it into two peninsulas.

Another way geographers use the theme of regions is to connect an area to a larger area. Here, geographers would investigate the question, *"To which regions does this place belong?"* Again, geographers look for places that share one or more common characteristics. For example, Michigan is part of the mid-west region of the United States, the Great Lakes region, or the eastern United States. Regions are determined by the characteristics you are using to describe the place.



Questions to Consider

- What common characteristic holds these states together?
- What do you think this region is named?

Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeastern_United_States

Social Scientists Help Us Understand Our World

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Map_Service

Geographers, like all social scientists, use a variety of tools and technologies to assist them in answering questions. The tools of geographers range from maps and globes to GPS and GIS. However, geographers are not the only social scientists that investigate human behavior and society. Some others social scientists include historians, political scientists, economists, anthropologists, and sociologists. Each of these scientists investigates the human condition through different types of questions, tools, and lenses that drive their investigations.

Historians

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Picture_of_the_Year/2007#/media/File:Old_book_bindings.jpg

The types of questions that historians ask relate to the past. Historians study our world by investigating people, events, and ideas of the past. However, historians have one major problem. An event happens once and is no longer visible for people to explore. All that is left is the residue from that event – the documents, artifacts, photographs, etc. As a result, historians have to act like detectives. They use historical evidence – artifacts, photographs, written records, and accounts by others – to try to answer questions about the past. Historians use this evidence to reconstruct the past much like a detective investigating a crime scene tries to use evidence to understand what happened.

If a historian was to investigate how a society transmits knowledge from one generation to another, he or she might ask some compelling questions such as "How has education in this community changed over time?" To begin to answer this question, the historian would generate a series of supporting questions such as:

- When was the first school in this community created?
- What did students do during the school day?

- What classes did students take?
- How many students were in a classroom?
- What was taught back then?

The historian would look for evidence to help answer the questions posed. School records, textbooks, lesson planning books, pictures, and yearbooks are some possible sources that may help the historian answer the questions above.

Answering a question about changes over time also requires the historian to make comparisons to today. To do so, he or she would investigate these same questions about education today. The historian may look at the same types of evidence – school records, textbooks, as well as observe and interview students and teachers today. There are many pieces of evidence a historian could use to help answer the question, "How has education in this community changed over time?"

Political Scientists:

Political scientists study power and authority and how people interact with rules and laws. This involves an understanding of governments and citizenship. A government is a system that people use to exercise authority, distribute power, and regulate the conduct of people.

Source: http://www.deerlake.leon.k12.fl.us/phi 1

Political scientists look at why governments are formed, what their purposes are, what kinds of political systems exist, and what specifically they do. They also study the role of citizens in a government. The questions they ask include:

- "Why is government needed?"
- "What does government do?"
- "How is government organized?"
- "On what values and principles is the government based?"
- "What role do citizens play in the government?"

A political scientist investigating education might ask questions involving who has power and authority in schools, how decisions get made, and who makes the rules.

Economists**:**

Economists study how people produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Put simply, they investigate how people and governments use resources to fulfill economic wants. They do this by exploring different kinds of economic systems, natural resources, human resources, and capital. They study decision making by individuals and societies. In examining individual decision making, economists explore how scarcity forces individuals to make choices. When examining how societies allocate resources, economists investigate decisions regarding specialization, trade, and interdependence among countries. They ask questions such as:

Source: http://blog.firstprestonht.com/files/201 1

- "What is produced?"
- "How is it produced?"
- "Who gets what is produced?"

An economist investigating education might ask about the wants or needs schools fulfill, the goods or services provided, and the types of resources needed to run a school.

Anthropologists:

Anthropologists study how cultures develop among humans. They examine the elements that create a culture including social customs and beliefs. They look at how cultures change over time. Questions anthropologists might ask include:

Source: http://cdn2.spiegel.de/images/image-1719 1

- "How has the culture of these people influenced how they

live?"

- "What foods, clothing, or types of shelter are found among people who live within this culture?"
- "How do the customs and beliefs of this group of people influence decisions they make in their community?"
- "How do differences in cultures reflect how people solve similar human problems?"

An anthropologist who is investigating education would ask questions about how the culture passes on knowledge from one generation to another and influences how a school is run (including the length of the school day or year). An anthropologist may also investigate how cultural differences between the United States and China are reflected in the education system of each nation.

Sociologists:

Finally, sociologists explore human societies and how humans organize themselves in groups. They study social groups and social classes, as well as their collective behavior. They ask questions such as:

- "How is this society structured?"
- "How does social class affect people?"
- "How do people organize to solve problems?"

A sociologist studying education might explore the effects of poverty, cultural background, and religion on schooling in different communities.

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/co 1

Building a Global Perspective

By using the questions, tools, and perspectives of different social scientists we can get a detailed picture of human societies and human behavior. These different perspectives are necessary to obtain a more complete view of the human condition and how people respond to problems they face. Since the geography, systems of government, economic systems,

culture, and history of people and places around the world vary, we will use all of these social science perspectives to help us understand the world and our place in it.

What Makes a Problem or Solution Global?

Human beings are meaning makers and problem solvers. Sometimes the problems people encounter affect only them or the people right around them. In those situations, it is easy to work together to find a solution. However, what if a solution requires the cooperation of people from many different nations to ultimately solve it? What if the problem is so big that it affects most or all of the people on the planet?

What are global problems?

Global problems are not just important problems or problems that affect many people. Global problems affect the whole planet or potentially all of the people who live on it. Examples of global problems include climate change, resource depletion, and ocean pollution. These problems affect all of humanity and other living organisms on Earth.

Let's look at an example – climate change. It is a problem because the consequences of humanly-generated changes in the atmosphere can affect everyone on the planet. In other words, the consequences are universal. Moreover, unless we profoundly change our collective behavior, climate change may well result in irreversible changes in the climatic conditions of life. It is easy to see that there will be no easy solution to the problem.

Global problems tend to be complex because they are connected to many other social studies concepts and issues. The causes of the present climate situation are related to our economic systems, our attitudes about nature, our political organizations, our technological capacities and preferences, and the way we use limited resources.

Sometimes solutions involve not just all communities and every country, but also require cooperation, rather than individual approaches. Climate change is a global problem because solving it will require the cooperation of different people from

different nations. Simply put, the example of climate change suggests that global problems are difficult, complex, and make human society as a whole at risk.

The solution may be the deciding factor

What if a problem cannot be solved by one person or one country alone? Even a local event may require a global solution. In the United States, most children are vaccinated against diseases such as measles, small pox, and polio. In the developing world, however, 1.5 million children die each year from vaccine-preventable diseases. There are multiple reasons for this. Countries in Africa lack the resources to combat this problem on their own. World organizations that have tried to eliminate these diseases rely on governments to report outbreaks. To help save lives, people from around the world bring medical supplies to these developing areas in the hopes of treating and preventing these diseases from becoming global problems once again.

Global problems are often connected to each other. This can be seen by looking at one global issue – poverty. Relating to the global problem of poverty are the other health issues such as hunger, medical needs, and nutritional issues. Moreover, other global problems are interconnected with poverty. Crime, overpopulation, urbanization, inequality, war and conflict, as well as migration issues are some of the other global issues related to poverty..

People have attempted to address global problems in various ways. People can work to improve the world through volunteerism, financial contributions, and raising awareness of the problems. Collective action by a group of concerned individuals can be a powerful way to improve our world. There are also governmental organizations that attempt to address global problems. Established in 1945, the United Nations is currently made up of 193 member countries. It seeks to address issues confronting humanity in the 21st century such as climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, health and humanitarian emergencies, and other global issues. The United States is a member state and holds a leadership position in this organization.