

I. The Five Themes of Geography

Geography is more than just knowing places and locations. Geography is also about asking important questions and organizing different information about an area.

To help organize all of this information, geographers have come up with five categories of information that they call the five themes of geography. Let's look at them shall we.

1) **Location**: Where is it?

Absolute location: an exact location. A good example of this is latitude and longitude coordinates. A full street address works also.

Relative location: where a location is in relation to someplace else. For instance, we live in northwestern Pennsylvania. Or we live about fifty miles south of Erie, PA. They are rough locations and aren't exact.

2) **Place**: What is it like there? How is it *unique*?

The key term is unique. Like people, no two towns, cities or countries are exactly alike. There are certain things about them that are unique or special. For instance Titusville is one of thousands of small, rural towns, but no other town on earth can lay claim our history, to Drake Well Museum or the OC & T Railroad. Also no other city can boast of the Eiffel Tower other than Paris, France. Place is what makes areas different.

3) **Human-Environment Interaction**: How do people and the environment effect one another?

We make use of our surroundings to support our way of life. For instance our farms, the timber industry and local hunters and fisherman take great advantage of our environment. However we also pollute the environment with our industries and automobiles. In addition the environment affects us. As the climate cools and winter sets in our activities will change dramatically from what we do in the summer. So the environment effects us just as we effect the environment.

4) **Movement**: How do people transfer goods and knowledge?

Look closely at the definition. This is what you think like trains, planes and automobiles, but it also includes things like money, libraries, newspapers, the internet, television and radio. However knowledge is transferred is movement.

5) **Region**: What does this area have in common with areas around it?

Place is what makes us unique. Well just as every town or city has things that make it special, every town or city also has things in common with other places around it. For instance Titusville, Oil City and Franklin are known together as the Oil Valley Region because of our shared history of oil. Oil built all three of these towns and thus we share that with each other.

Those are the Five Themes of Geography. Again they are a nice simple ways for us to categorize lots and lots of information. Where do we get lots and lots of information on countries? Well that's my next topic!

II. Where do we get lots and lots of Geographic Information? Why the World Almanac of course.

World Almanacs and country fact books give us incredible amounts of information on different countries around the world. In class we are going to research the five themes on different countries using these World Almanacs. Before we can do so, however, we need to understand some of the vocabulary these Almanacs use.

Infant mortality rate: this is usually listed as number of deaths for every 1,000 births in a country. This usually tells us how good a countries medical facilities are.

Life expectancy: this is the average age that people can expect to live to in a country. This is listed separately for men and women. This also can tell you a countries medical facilities, but also could clue you in to what effects disease or war are having.

Literacy: percentage of people aged 15 and up that can read and write in that country. Countries with high literacy rates usually have mandatory and free public education and are very wealthy nations. Countries with low literacy rates usually do not have a free, mandatory education and these countries people are usually very poor. Gee I wonder if there is a connection between education and wealth?

G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product): the total income of every person in a country. This can show a countries overall wealth but a better number is the next one.

G.D.P. per capita: take the G.D.P. and divide it by the population of that country. This number is the average income of the average person in that country. In many countries the average yearly income is only a few hundred dollars. These countries usually also have low literacy rates and low life expectancies.

Ethnic groups: these are different groups of people in a country with different ancestral backgrounds. Don't confuse this with race. For instance in this country we have Hispanics, Native Americans, African-Americans, Asian Americans. They are different ethnic groups in our nation. In our country all people are free and equal. This is not always the case in other nations so this can be important.