

AP Human Geography

Summer Assignment 2026

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What is where? Why there? Why care?

These are the questions we will try to answer in AP Human Geography this year. Geography is the study not only of physical features and systems (as commonly thought) but of human systems; where population is distributed, what cultural, social, and economic patterns exist throughout the world, and what impacts human activities have on cultural and physical landscapes. This course is organized into seven units, broadly organized into three categories: cultural geography, political geography, and economic geography. The study of geography requires reading and analyzing data in the form of maps, charts, graphs, and photographs; these skills are essential to success in this class.

Our first unit is an introduction to spatial thinking and key geographic concepts we will use throughout the year. This summer assignment will introduce you to some of these concepts, skills, and ideas that will carry through every unit. Please complete the reading and graphic organizers and be prepared to turn it in on the first day of regular classes.

Summer Assignment: A Brief Explanation

This year you will complete seven “Geo-Journals” (one for each unit of study). These journals include required readings from the textbook and vocabulary, graphic organizers, and other activities to guide your reading and help you understand and retain the information. For the most part, Geo-Journals are completed as homework over the course of the unit (usually about a month), and they are turned in at the end of the unit for a 25 point homework grade.

Each unit has three “Big Ideas” categories, including Patterns and Spatial Organization (PSO), Impacts and Interactions (IMP) and Spatial Processes and Societal Change (SPS). These categories are used to organize the key concepts and main ideas of each unit. You will see these categories, along with their guiding questions, in each Geo-Journal you complete this year.

Your summer assignment consists of your Unit 1 Geo-Journal. As you will see, it includes the required textbook readings, essential information you should know, and guided notes to take as or after you read. The first two chapters of your textbook are available for you in PDF format with this assignment; you will receive a physical copy of the text in September.

Please complete the reading (Chapters One and Two) and all sections of the activities included in this document (Part 1 and Part 2).

Please color and label the three maps. The first map (Big Picture) and second map (A Closer Look) organize the world into regions. We will refer to these regions throughout the year, so it is important you learn them. The third map requires you to label the states of the USA (capitals are not required).

You may email me with any questions or concerns you have at ksteiert@gmahs.org. Please note I do not check emails every day during the summer, so you may have to wait up to a week for a response. I look forward to meeting you and learning with you in the coming year!

- Mrs. Steiert

Part 1: Patterns and Spatial Organization. *Why do geographers study relationships and patterns among and between places?*

Required Reading:

Chapter 1.1 – What is Human Geography?

Chapter 1.2 – Spatial Patterns: Scale and Region

Chapter 1.3 – Globalization and Sustainability

Essential Knowledge:

Topic 1.4: Spatial Concepts

- Spatial concepts include absolute and relative location, space, place, flows, distance decay, time-space compression, and pattern.

Topic 1.5: Human-Environment Interaction

- Concepts of nature and society include sustainability, natural resources, and land use.
- Theories regarding the interaction of the natural environment with human societies have evolved from environmental determinism to possibilism.

Topic 1.6: Scales of Analysis

- Scales of analysis include global, regional, national, and local.
- Patterns and processes at different scales reveal variations in and different interpretations of, data.

1. Comparisons. Complete the chart. For each term, provide a definition or brief description in your own words. In the middle column, identify 1-3 similarities between the two terms. The first comparison has been completed for you.

Defining characteristics of...	Similarities between...	Defining characteristics of...
1. Physical geography: Physical geography is the study of natural features & processes of the Earth's surface, including landforms, climate, tectonics, erosion, and vegetation.	Physical and human geography both study where different patterns and processes are on the surface of the Earth and the impacts of different activities. They both use spatial data to solve problems and draw conclusions.	2. Human geography: Human geography is the study of the distribution of people and human activities, such as migration, language, political systems, urbanization, and agriculture.
3. Spatial Perspective:		4. Ecological Perspective:
5. Location:		6. Place:

Defining characteristics of...	Similarities between...	Defining characteristics of...
7. Site:		8. Situation:
9. Environmental determinism:		10. Possibilism:

2. Vocabulary. Complete the chart. In the first column, provide a full-sentence definition or brief description in your own words. In the second column, identify 1-2 specific examples and briefly explain. The first term has been completed for you.

Description	Example(s)
1. Absolute location: Absolute location is the exact position of something on the Earth's surface, such as a specific street address or the use of geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude) to provide location.	Philadelphia is located at 40 degrees North, 75 degrees West. This is an example of absolute location because it uses latitude and longitude.
2. Relative location:	
3. Space:	
4. Distribution:	
5. Density:	

Description	Example(s)
6. Flow:	
7. Sustainability:	
8. Scale of analysis:	
9. Globalization:	
10. Sustainable development:	

3. Skills Practice. Refer to your reading and answer each question in complete sentences.

1. Review the New Orleans – Site vs. Situation Case Study on pages 12-13. In a few sentences, explain why New Orleans’s founders decided that the advantages of the location’s situation outweighed the disadvantages of its site.

2. Review the Scales of Analysis: Food Insecurity in the United States maps on page 15. In about 2 sentences, explain what using different scales of analysis reveals about food insecurity in the United States.

Part 2: Spatial Processes and Societal Change. How do geographers use a spatial perspective to analyze complex issues and relationships?

Required Reading:

Chapter 1.2 – Spatial Patterns: Scale and Region

Essential Knowledge:

Topic 1.7: Regional Analysis

- Regions are defined on the basis of one or more unifying characteristics or on patterns of activity.
- Types of regions include formal, functional, and perceptual/vernacular.
- Regional boundaries are transitional and often contested and overlapping.
- Geographers apply regional analysis at local, national, and global scales.

1. Key Concepts. Complete the chart. In the first column, describe the defining characteristics of each region type in your own words. In the middle column, identify 2-3 specific examples of that type of region. In the last column, draw a visual representation of what the region looks like or how it is defined.

Description	Examples	Visual Representation
<u>Formal/Uniform Region</u>	<u>Formal/Uniform Region</u>	<u>Formal/Uniform Region</u>
<u>Functional/Nodal Region</u>	<u>Functional/Nodal Region</u>	<u>Functional/Nodal Region</u>
<u>Perceptual/Vernacular Region</u>	<u>Perceptual/Vernacular Region</u>	<u>Perceptual/Vernacular Region</u>

2. Skills Practice. Review the “Interpret Maps” skills practice on New York and Philadelphia media markets on page 25. Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. Identify the type of region represented in the map. How do you know? (1-2 sentences)

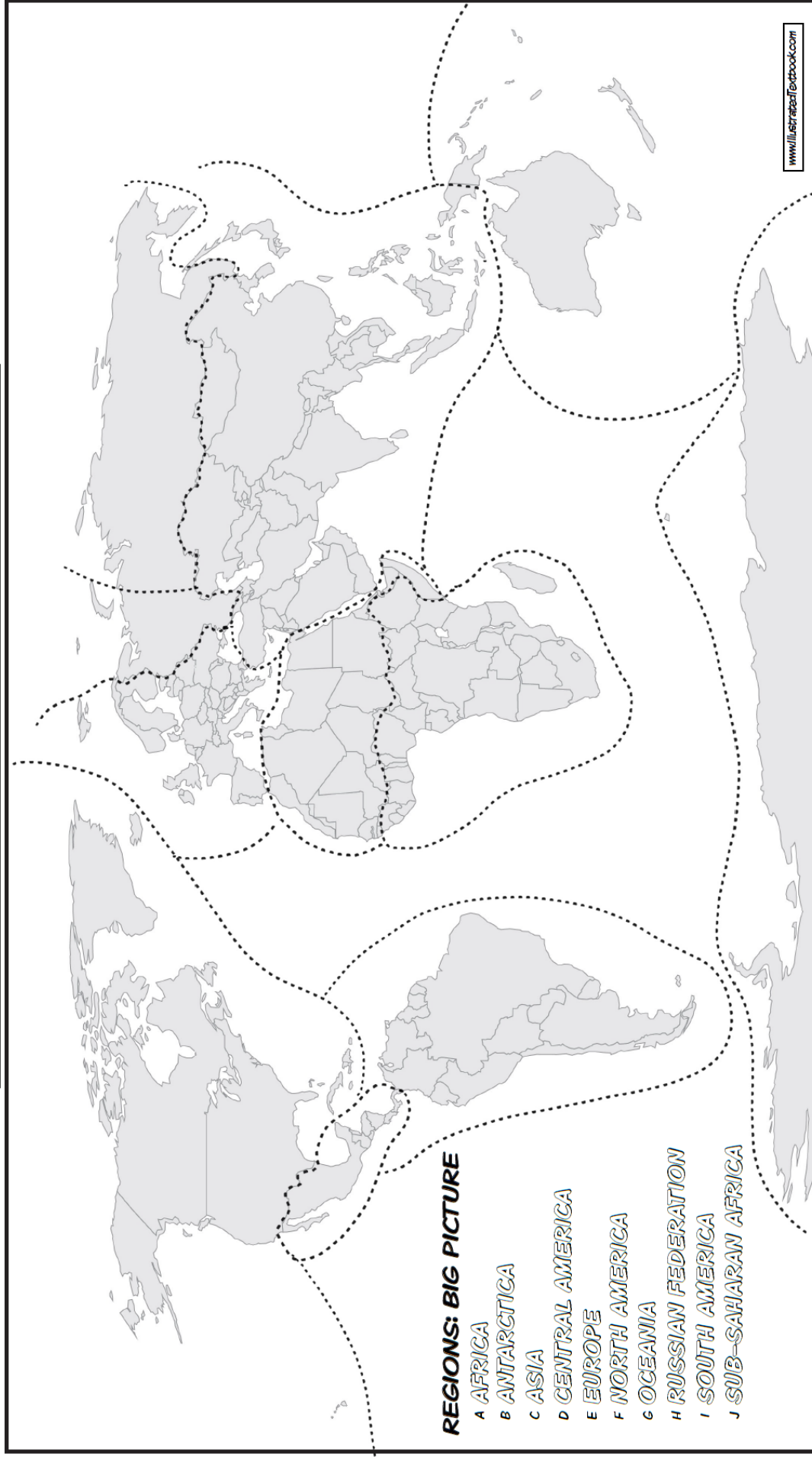
2. Describe how the two media markets might have an impact on daily life in South Jersey and North Jersey (2-3 sentences).

3. Explain why the boundaries of the regions shown in the map are more distinct than they would be if the map depicted the extent of a sports team's fans (1-2 sentences).

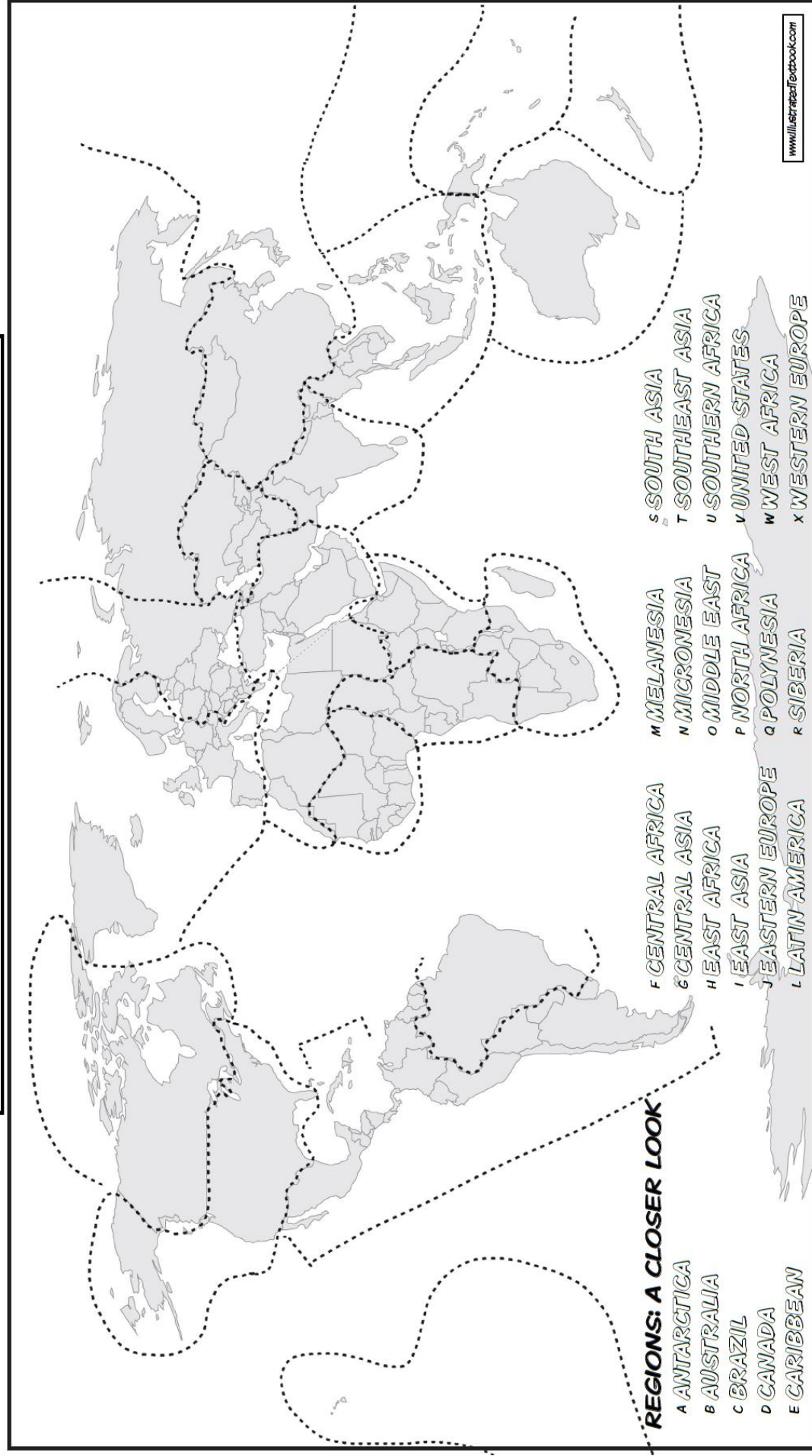
4. Explain why the reach of New York and Philadelphia's media markets might have less impact today than it would have had 30 years ago (2-3 sentences).

3. Maps. Neatly color and label each of the three maps on the following pages, including two world regions maps and one map of the United States.

WORLD REGION DESIGNATIONS: BIG PICTURE



WORLD REGION DESIGNATIONS: A CLOSER LOOK



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A ALABAMA C ARIZONA
B ALASKA D ARKANSAS
E CALIFORNIA

F COLORADO K HAWAII
G CONNECTICUT L IDAHO
H DELAWARE M ILLINOIS
I FLORIDA N INDIANA
J GEORGIA O IOWA
P KANSAS

Q KENTUCKY Z MONTANA
R LOUISIANA
S MAINE
T MARYLAND
U MASSACHUSETTS
V MICHIGAN
W MINNESOTA
X MISSISSIPPI
Y MISSOURI

19 VERMONT
20 VIRGINIA
21 WASHINGTON
22 WEST VIRGINIA
23 WISCONSIN
24 WYOMING

1 NEBRASKA
2 NEVADA
3 NEW HAMPSHIRE
4 NEW JERSEY
5 NEW MEXICO
6 NEW YORK
7 NORTH CAROLINA
8 NORTH DAKOTA
9 OHIO
10 OKLAHOMA
11 OREGON
12 PENNSYLVANIA
13 RHODE ISLAND
14 SOUTH CAROLINA
15 SOUTH DAKOTA
16 TENNESSEE
17 TEXAS
18 UTAH

Part 3: Impacts and Interactions. *How do geographers use maps to help them discover patterns and relationships in the world?*

Required Reading:

Chapter 2.1 – Thinking Like a Geographer: The Geo-Inquiry Process

Chapter 2.2 – Geographic Data and Tools

Chapter 2.3 – Understanding Maps

Chapter 2.4 – The Power of Data

Essential Knowledge:

Topic 1.1: Introduction to Maps

- Types of maps include reference maps and thematic maps.
- Types of spatial patterns represented on maps include absolute and relative distance and direction, clustering, dispersal, and elevation.
- All maps are selective in information; map projections inevitably distort spatial relationships in shape, area, distance, and direction.

Topic 1.2: Geographic Data

- Data may be gathered in the field by organizations or by individuals.
- Geospatial technologies include geographic information systems (GIS), satellite navigation systems, remote sensing, and online mapping and visualization.
- Spatial information can come from written accounts in the form of field observations, media reports, travel narratives, policy documents, personal interviews, landscape analysis, and photographic interpretation.

Topic 1.3: The Power of Geographic Data

- Geospatial and geographical data, including census data and satellite imagery, are used at all scales for personal, business and organizational, and governmental decision-making purposes.

1. This or That? Determine whether each statement describes quantitative or qualitative data, and check the box that best applies.

Description	Quantitative?	Qualitative?
Surveyors measure elevation with GPS technology and confirm that Mount Everest is 29,032 feet high.		
Economists analyze income tax data and calculate that the median household income in Seattle is \$116,000		
Transportation researchers ask commuters about their experiences in Los Angeles and find that many describe their daily bus ride as “crowded and unreliable.”		
Public transportation agencies conduct rider counts and determine that 65% of Mexico City’s population uses public transit regularly.		
Urban planners hold focus groups and learn that people in a new suburb appreciate green spaces in the business district, but find the new shopping mall to be uninviting, sterile, and difficult to access.		

2. Comparisons. For each pair of words, write a statement describing what they are and how they are different. Your answer for each pair of words should be about 2 complete sentences. Where possible, use examples to support your comparisons.

a. Absolute Distance vs. Relative Distance

b. Absolute Direction vs. Relative Direction

c. Reference Map vs. Thematic Map

d. Small-Scale Map vs. Large-Scale Map

e. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) vs. Global Positioning System (GPS)

f. Remote Sensing vs. Field-Based Inquiry