

Unit 1: Defining Regions

4th Grade Humanities

40 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Essential Questions

- How do maps help us understand the physical, cultural, and environmental features of different regions in the United States?
- How have environmental characteristics and human-made changes shaped U.S. regions over time?
- What makes each region of the United States unique, and how do people and the environment influence one another over time?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Maps and other geographic tools help us visualize, compare, and understand the physical, cultural, and environmental features of different regions.

- Create and interpret different types of maps to show U.S. regions and their boundaries.
- Use maps and visual representations to identify natural resources, landmarks, and cultural features of U.S. regions.
- Describe how maps help explain the relationship between the land and human settlement patterns.

EU 2: Environmental characteristics and human-made changes—such as population growth, infrastructure, and land use—shape how U.S. regions develop and change over time.

- Examine how environmental and human factors—such as the building of dams, highways, or urban development—affect regional landscapes.
- Utilize historical and present-day maps to identify changes in land use, population centers, and environmental features.
- Analyze how natural disasters, climate zones, and economic shifts have contributed to migration and regional transformation.

EU 3: Each U.S. region is unique in its geography, culture, and climate, and people continuously adapt to their environment through innovation, migration, and planning.

- Describe how geographic and climatic conditions (e.g., tundra, deserts, forests) affect daily life and resource use in various regions.
- Explore how communities prepare for and respond to natural or human-made disasters based on their environment.
- Explain how individuals and groups adapt to the effects of climate change and changing resource availability within their specific region.

Standards

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

- **4.Geo.1. a.:** Demonstrate spatial awareness by creating maps to illustrate regions within or extending beyond the political boundaries of the United States (e.g., Grand Canyon, Great Lakes, Standing Rock Indian Reservation, Pacific Northwest).
- **4.Geo.2. a.:** Explain the relationship between natural resources and human settlement in United States regions using maps, photographs, and other representations (e.g., Great Lakes, Connecticut River Valley, Mississippi River Delta, Pacific Northwest).

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- **4.Geo.2. b.:** Use historical maps and other visual representations to explain how environmental characteristics of a United States region change over time (e.g., population centers, built environment, dams, national parks, ports, military bases).
- **4.Geo.3. a.:** Use state and regional maps to describe cultural and environmental characteristics of regions (e.g., state capitals, heritage sites, national monuments).
- **4.Geo.9. a.:** Analyze how catastrophic environmental and economic events have caused migration within and across various regions of the United States (e.g., hurricanes, land erosion, wildfire, unemployment, famine).
- **4.Geo.10.a:** Explain how and why environmental characteristics vary across regions in the United States and North America (e.g., coastal zone, forest, grassland, tundra, desert).
- **4.Geo.12.a:** Explain how individuals and groups prepare for and respond to natural and human-made disasters (e.g., levees, building codes, erosion and settlement control, wildlife crossings).
- **4.Geo.12. b.:** Explain how individuals and groups adapt to climate change based on the unique characteristics of their region (e.g., longer growing seasons, water storage, conservation, Federal Emergency Management Agency).
- **4.Inq.1. a.:** Explain why compelling questions about a United States region are important to others (e.g., peers, adults).
- **4.Inq.1. b.:** Explain how supporting questions help answer compelling questions in an inquiry about a United States region.
- **4.Inq.1. c.:** Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the question.
- **4.Inq.2. a.:** Apply disciplinary knowledge and practices to demonstrate an understanding of United States geography content.
- **4.Inq.3. a.:** Gather relevant information from multiple sources about an event or issue in a United States region.
- **4.Inq.3. b.:** Identify evidence response to a compelling question while determining among fact and opinion to determine the credibility of multiple sources.
- **4.Inq.3. c.:** Use evidence to develop claims in response to a compelling question by using evidence related to the geography of a United States region.
- **4.Inq.4. a.:** Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources about a United States region.
- **4.Inq.4. b.:** Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.
- **4.Inq.4. c.:** Critique arguments and explanations.
- **4.Inq.4. d.:** Present a summary of arguments and explanations with relevant information about a person, event, or issue in a United States region using print, oral, and digital technologies (e.g., reasoning, correct sequence, examples, data, details).
- **4.Inq.4. e.:** Explain the challenges and opportunities, both present and past, in addressing local, regional, and global problems in a United States region.
- **4.Inq.4. f.:** Use a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to evaluate and implement strategies to address problems in classrooms and schools.

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Common Core State Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1:** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2:** Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4:** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.9:** Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.a:** Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.b:** Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.c:** Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.d:** Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.e:** Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5:** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6:** With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8:** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information and provide a list of sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.a:** Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.b:** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

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- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.c:** Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.d:** Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2:** Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud, or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.3:** Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4:** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

1. Maps and Geographic Tools

- Learn how to read, analyze, and create different types of maps—including physical, political, cultural, and resource maps.
- Develop spatial awareness by identifying U.S. regions and key features such as the Great Lakes, Mississippi River, and national monuments.
- Explore how people use land and resources, how cultural identities are connected to place, and how regions are defined by both natural and human-made features using visual tools like photographs, diagrams, and digital maps, students.

2. Environmental Characteristics and Human-Made Changes

- Investigate how environmental features such as rivers, coastlines, forests, and plains influence how and where people live.
- Explore how those features have changed due to human activity.
- Analyze how cities, ports, and parks have grown, how infrastructure like dams and military bases have changed land use using historical and current maps.
- Determine how disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, and land erosion impact migration and development.
- Compare how different types of regions (e.g., deserts, forests, coastal zones) support different types of human activity, and how human decisions in those areas have long-term effects.

3. Unique U.S. Regions

- Explore the idea of regional uniqueness through the lenses of climate, natural resources, disaster preparedness, and cultural practices.

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- Determine how people in different parts of the country prepare for and respond to challenges such as drought, flooding, wildfires, and cold climates.
- Examine how communities use tools like levees, water conservation, building codes, and wildlife protection to adapt to local conditions.
- Consider how climate change is affecting regions differently and how people are adapting with longer growing seasons, emergency management, and new technologies.

Vocabulary and Key Terms: region, map key (legend), compass rose, scale, political map, physical map, cultural map, resource map, coordinates, boundary, spatial awareness, location, landmark, landform, coastline, mountain range, plateau, delta, river valley, climate, grassland, forest, desert, tundra, ecosystem, habitat, natural resource, settlement, land use, agriculture, industry, infrastructure, port, dam, military base, national park, urbanization, adaptation, migration, climate change, conservation, erosion, wildfire, hurricane, drought, levee, building codes, disaster preparedness, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), water storage, historical map, aerial photograph, source, representation, compare, analyze, cause and effect

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- ELA, Science

Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

Students will be able to...

- Identify and label the major regions of the United States on a map.
 - *How does dividing the U.S. into regions help us better understand its people and places?*
- Interpret a map using symbols, a legend, and a compass rose.
 - *How do symbols on a map help tell the story of a place?*
- Explain the purpose of a map scale and apply it to estimate distances.
 - *Why is understanding distance important when reading a map?*
- Compare physical and political maps of the United States.
 - *What different kinds of information can we learn from physical and political maps?*
- Use a cultural map to identify heritage sites and landmarks in different U.S. regions.
 - *How do cultural features on a map show what people value in different places?*
- Create a thematic map showing major U.S. rivers and mountain ranges.
 - *How have landforms like rivers and mountains shaped where people live?*
- Use resource maps to identify how natural resources are distributed across regions.
 - *What can a map of natural resources tell us about where and how people work?*
- Use maps and photographs to describe the environment of the Pacific Northwest.
 - *How does the geography of a region influence the lives of the people who live there?*
- Locate and describe national monuments and state capitals using a U.S. map.
 - *What do monuments and capitals tell us about a region's identity?*
- Analyze how geographic features are represented differently on various types of maps.
 - *How does the way a map is designed influence what we learn from it?*
- Create a detailed map of a U.S. region showing cultural, physical, and environmental features.
 - *Why is it important to include multiple features when mapping a region?*
- Define environmental characteristics and identify examples in different U.S. regions.

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- *What makes each region's environment unique?*
- Compare historical and modern maps to identify environmental changes in a region.
 - *What kinds of changes can we see when we compare old and new maps?*
- Describe how infrastructure (dams, highways, cities) changes land use over time.
 - *How does building something new change the land around it?*
- Explain how population growth affects the environment of a region.
 - *How do more people in a region change how the land is used?*
- Explore the environmental impact of building ports, military bases, and urban centers.
 - *How do we decide where to build important facilities, and what are the effects?*
- Identify regions most affected by erosion, wildfires, and natural disasters.
 - *How do natural disasters change both people's lives and the land they live on?*
- Analyze how hurricanes have shaped migration patterns in the U.S.
 - *What happens to communities when they are hit by a natural disaster?*
- Use maps and case studies to explore land erosion and its long-term effects.
 - *What do people do when land disappears or becomes unsafe to live on?*
- Describe how climate zones vary across the U.S. and influence human activity.
 - *Why don't all people in the U.S. live the same way?*
- Compare the desert, tundra, and coastal zones of North America.
 - *How do different environments require different ways of living?*
- Investigate how human activities have contributed to environmental change in a region.
 - *How are people responsible for changing the environment?*
- Explain how economic changes, such as unemployment or new industries, lead to migration.
 - *How does the economy shape where people live?*
- Evaluate how regional changes affect both the environment and local culture.
 - *When a region changes, how does it affect the way people live and work?*
- Describe how people prepare for natural disasters in different regions.
 - *How do people plan for disasters depending on where they live?*
- Analyze how levees, building codes, and emergency plans reduce risk.
 - *What can communities do to stay safe during dangerous events?*
- Explain how conservation efforts help people protect their environment.
 - *How can people work with nature instead of against it?*
- Identify how farming practices adapt to changing weather patterns.
 - *What happens when farmers can't grow food the same way anymore?*
- Describe how people adapt to longer growing seasons or extreme weather.
 - *How does climate change affect people differently depending on where they live?*
- Explore how regions manage water supply and storage.
 - *Why is water management important in both dry and wet regions?*
- Explain how communities use technology to adapt to climate challenges.
 - *What inventions or tools help people live safely in challenging environments?*
- Compare how different regions respond to environmental change.
 - *Why might two regions respond differently to the same problem?*
- Investigate how wildlife crossings and settlement planning reduce environmental harm.
 - *How can we design communities that protect both people and nature?*
- Create a case study of a community that has successfully adapted to environmental change.

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- *What can we learn from how one place solved an environmental challenge?*
- Reflect on how geography, environment, and human activity shape the identity of a region.
 - *What makes a region's story unique, and how is it still being written today?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Sentence starters
- Teacher modeling
- Graphic organizers
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals
- Small group instruction
- Visual exemplars with teacher and student critiques
- Text and video chunking
- Spiraling back to guiding questions
- Multiple CFUs
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

EL Differentiation Strategies

- Word Banks and Word Walls with visuals
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic Grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Academic Discourse
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Performance Task -- "A Region's Story"
 - Teacher's rubric/scoring guide

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SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz: Vocabulary terms and definitions (EU1, EU2, and EU3)
- Listen/Interpret FIAB
- Unit Task: “A Region’s Story” (EU1, EU2 and EU3)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: “A Regions Story”

Description: Students will select one U.S. region and create a multi-modal presentation that tells the story of that region’s geography, human-environment interaction, and cultural evolution over time. Students must use maps, historical analysis, and creative thinking to explain how environmental characteristics and human decisions have shaped the region’s identity—and how people continue to adapt today. Students will research and build a regional storybook or presentation that includes maps, real-world data, source analysis, and creative writing. They will not only show what makes the region unique, but also how people have shaped the region—and how the region continues to shape them.

Evaluation: Teacher’s Scoring Guide

Unit Resources

- Immigrant Narrative Description and Exemplars (developed and refined with class)
- Google Classroom
- Historical Fiction Book Read Aloud
- Community Faces – Student Work (Primary and Secondary Sources Included)
- Climate and Geographical Resources - Teacher Google Slides
- Central and South American Map
- Push / Pull Factors Article
- Immigrant Stereotypes Reading
- Fact, Reasoned Opinion, Stereotype Graphic Organizer
- Reflection Form Template
- Peer Critique / Revision Form Template