

AP Human Geography: Geography: Its Nature and Perspective

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Key Takeaways: Geography: Its Nature and Perspectives

1. The Greeks were the first society to introduce geography as a subject. Eratosthenes is credited with being the first person to use the word geography, geo meaning “Earth” and graphy meaning “to write.”
2. The five themes of geography allow geographers to make each place unique and to tie them together. Humans alter the environment to meet their needs.
3. Diffusion is the spread or movement of a principle or phenomenon. Relocation and expansion diffusion are means by which an idea or phenomenon spreads. Expansion diffusion is further broken down into contagious, stimulus, and hierarchical diffusion.
4. There are three types of regions: formal, functional, and perceptual/vernacular.
5. There are three main aspects of distribution: density, concentration, and patterns. All are used to assist in determining spatial characteristics of the landscape.
6. Geography is a multidisciplinary approach to studying the world around us. Logic, data analysis, and models are thus important tools.

Geography: Its Nature and Perspectives Key Terms

Historical Foundations of Geography

- **Geography:** The description of the Earth’s surface and the people and processes that shape those landscapes.
- **Environmental determinism:** A philosophy of geography that stated that human behaviors are a direct result of the surrounding environment. While discredited for decades due to its use as a justification for European imperialism, it has undergone a recent revival in the form of neo-environmental determinism. This variation emphasizes how natural resources and ecology affect the development, expansion, and potential collapse of societies.
- **Possibilist:** An approach to geography favored by most contemporary geographers. It suggests that humans are not a product of their environment, but rather that they possess the skills necessary to change their environment to

satisfy human needs. People can determine their own outcomes without regard to location.

Maps: An Introduction

- **Scale:** The relationship of the size of the map to the amount of area it represents on the planet. In other words, scale is the abstract dimension into which one renders the real world.
- **Equal-area projection:** Maps that try to distribute distortion equally throughout the map; these maps distort shapes.
- **Conformal maps:** Maps that distort area but keep shapes intact.
- **Cylindrical maps:** Maps that distort shapes but show true direction (e.g., a Mercator map).
- **Global positioning systems (GPS):** A way for geographers to obtain new information, GPS technology is found in cars and cellphones; it uses the Earth's latitude and longitude coordinates to determine an exact location. It is owned by the U.S. government. GLONASS is the Russian competitor and counterpart to GPS.
- **Geographic information systems (GIS):** A way for geographers to obtain new information, GIS layers geographic information into a new map, showing specific types of geographic data. Watersheds, population density, highways, and agricultural data are geographic features that can be used as layers of data.
- **Satellite imagery:** Images of the Earth taken from artificial satellites orbiting the planet. Important for GIS and remote sensing.
- **Remote sensing:** Studying an object or location without making physical contact with it. For example, satellites have mapped the ocean floor by studying gravity waves.
- **Planar maps:** Maps that show true direction and examine the Earth from one point, usually from a pole or a polar direction (e.g., any azimuthal map).
- **Conic maps:** Maps that put a cone over the Earth and keep distance intact but lose directional qualities.
- **Oval maps:** Maps that combine the cylindrical and conic projections (e.g., the Mollweide projection).
- **Thematic maps:** Used to determine some type of geographic phenomenon, thematic maps can be represented in various ways: area class maps, area symbol maps, cartograms, choropleth maps, digital images, dot maps, flow-line maps, isoline maps, point symbol maps, and proportional symbol maps.
- **Isoline maps:** An abstract map which outlines and connects points of identical value. An example is the weather map, which shows temperature or rainfall as overlapping colored blobs.

- **Flow-line maps:** Maps that are good for determining movement, such as migration trends.
- **Choropleth maps:** Maps that put data into a spatial format and are useful for determining demographic data by assigning colors or patterns to areas.
- **Cartograms:** Maps that assign space by the size of some datum. For example, world population by country is often illustrated in a cartogram, with countries with larger populations appearing larger on the map.
- **Toponym:** A place name, often based on similar features within a certain area.

Themes of Geography

- **Human geography:** The study of human characteristics on the landscape, including population, agriculture, urbanization, and culture.
- **Built landscape:** Produced by the physical material culture, it is the sum of tangible human creations on the landscape.
- **Sequent occupance:** The idea that each civilization leaves an influence on the cultural landscape of place, affecting the civilizations that come after them.
- **Physical geography:** The study of the physical features of the Earth and the attempt to define how they work.
- **Place:** The description of what we see and of how we see and experience a certain aspect of the Earth's surface.
- **Region:** A concept used to link different places together based on any parameter the geographer chooses.
- **Formal regions:** Regions where anything and everything inside has the same characteristic or phenomena.
- **Functional regions:** Regions that can be defined around a certain point or node; functional regions are most intense around the center but lose their characteristics as the distance from the focal point increases. See distance decay.
- **Distance decay:** The lessening of a phenomenon as the distance from the hearth increases.
- **Friction of distance:** Longer distances require increasing amounts of energy or money to traverse, meaning that people will feel metaphorical friction (resistance) to going someplace far away.
- **Perceptual/vernacular region:** A region that exists primarily in the individual's perception or feelings (e.g., the concept of "the South" differs depending on where someone lives in the United States).
- **Relative location:** A location that is based on, or refers to, another feature on the Earth's surface.
- **Absolute location:** Location based on latitude and longitude coordinates.

- **Site:** The internal characteristics of a place based on its physical features.
Situation: The relationship that a particular location has with the locations around it.
- **Mental map:** A map that contains what a person believes to exist; most people have mental maps, and they prove to be a useful tool in communication.
- **Latitudes (parallels):** Parallel lines that run east/west on the surface of the Earth; the highest degree of latitude is 90 degrees.
- **Equator:** The latitude line that runs in the middle of the Earth. It is at 0 degrees latitude. Anything to the north of the equator is in the northern hemisphere, and anything to the south of the equator is in the southern hemisphere.
- **Longitudes (meridians):** Parallel lines that run north/south on the surface of the Earth.
- **Prime meridian:** The 0 degree longitude line, which runs through Greenwich, in southeast London, England. It divides the eastern hemisphere and the western hemisphere.
- **Time zone:** Based largely on the 15-degree longitude principle, although the exact location of the line may vary to take into account other factors, such as political boundaries and domestic political policy.
- **International Date Line:** An imaginary boundary between one day and the next. It was created alongside the international system of time zones. The farthest that one can go on the longitude scale is 180 degrees, and that longitude roughly represents the International Date Line. It zigzags its way through the Pacific Ocean, owing to the location of countries there.
- **Human-environment interaction:** How people modify or alter the environment to fit individual or societal needs.
- **Five toos:** The types of areas where humans cannot live: too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, and too hilly.
- **Spatial interaction or movement:** Concerned with how linked a place is to the outside world, this theme of geography deals mainly with area, because how well an area is connected to the world determines its importance.

Essential Elements of Geography

- **Time-space compression:** The increasing interconnectedness that human civilization enjoys despite physical distance being fixed.

Diffusion

- **Diffusion:** The spread or movement of a principle or idea.

- **Hearth:** The place where a given characteristic began is known as a hearth, and diffusion is the process by which it is spread.
- **Relocation diffusion:** The spreading of a custom when people move; language tends to be spread through relocation diffusion.
- **Expansion diffusion:** The term used to describe the spread of a characteristic from a central node through various means. There are three different types of expansion diffusion: hierarchical, contagious, and stimulus diffusion.
- **Hierarchical diffusion:** The notion that a phenomenon spreads as a result of the social elite, such as political leaders, entertainment leaders, or famous athletes, spreading societal ideas or trends.
- **Contagious diffusion:** The process of spreading a culture from one place to another through direct contact, similar to the way disease spreads.
- **Stimulus diffusion:** The spread of a particular concept that is then used in another product.

Distribution

- **Distribution:** This term comes from the idea that everything on the Earth's surface must have a physical location. There are three different aspects of distribution: density, concentration, and pattern.
- **Density:** A term used to describe how often an object occurs within a given area or space; most often used in terms of population density.
- **Population density:** When calculating arithmetic population density, the number of people is divided by the amount of land to arrive at a number of people per square mile/ kilometer. Population density can be expressed in other ways as well, such as with physiological density.
- **Physiological density:** Refers to the total number of people divided by the arable (farmable) land; a more accurate measure of population density than arithmetic density.
- **Arithmetic density:** Determined by dividing the population of a country by the total land area.
- **Concentration:** The density of particular phenomena over an area; in terms of concentration, objects can either be clustered or agglomerated.
- **Clustered (agglomerated):** In the area of concentration, objects that are close together are considered clustered (or agglomerated).
- **Dispersed (scattered):** In the area of concentration, if the objects are spread out, they are considered dispersed (or scattered).
- **Pattern:** May be anything from triangular to linear or even three-dimensional, as with high-rise buildings. Patterns are related to how objects are organized in

their space. Geometric shapes are used to describe how the phenomena are laid out.

- **Linear:** A pattern where the items are laid out on a singular line.
- **Centralized:** A pattern where the items are clustered together.
- **Random distribution:** The lack of a pattern on the landscape

Mathematical Principles and Geographic Models

- **Ecological fallacy:** The assumption that the relationships at one scale also exist at other scales.
- **Rank-size rule:** The principle that relates cities' relative population sizes to their rank within a country.