

COMPETENCY 1.1 PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICA**Skill 1.1a Demonstrate knowledge of North America's location in the world and of the continent's rivers, lakes, and important land features**

North America consists of Canada; the United States of America; Mexico; the Caribbean island nations of the West Indies including Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic; and the "land bridge" of Middle America, including Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and others.

At its most northern extreme, Alaska and Canada border the Arctic Ocean. At its most southern extreme, the Isthmus of Panama borders Colombia. The west coast borders the Pacific Ocean, while the east coast borders the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico, further southeast.

The major freshwater bodies are the Great Lakes—Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior—which lie between Canada and the United States. The Mississippi River is the longest North American river, extending from the U.S.-Canada border to the Gulf of Mexico, draining the Ohio River from the east and the Missouri River to the west. Other significant rivers are the St. Lawrence, which connects Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean, and the Rio Grande, which forms most of the border between Mexico and the United States.

The three most significant mountain ranges are the Appalachian Mountains, which extend from the Canadian Maritime Provinces south to Georgia in the United States along the eastern seaboard; the Rocky Mountains, which extend from west-central Canada through the United States to Mexico; and the Sierra Nevada cordillera, which extends from Alaska in the United States, through Canada, through the west coast of the United States, and through Mexico and Mesoamerica to South America.

Skill 1.1b Demonstrate knowledge of broad climate patterns and physiographic regions

Climate is average weather or daily weather conditions for a specific region or location over a long or extended period of time. Studying the climate of an area includes information gathered on the area's monthly and yearly temperatures and its monthly and yearly amounts of precipitation. In addition, a characteristic of an area's climate is the length of its growing season. Four reasons for the different climate regions on the earth are differences in the following:

Latitude,
The amount of moisture,
Temperatures in land and water, and
The earth's land surface.

The earth has many different climates. It is most unusual if a country contains just one kind of climate. Regions of climates are divided according to latitudes.

0 - 23½° are the "**low latitudes**"
23½° - 66½° are the "**middle latitudes**"
66½° to the Poles are the "**high latitudes**"

The **low latitudes** are composed of the rainforest, savanna, and desert climates. The tropical rainforest climate is found in equatorial lowlands and is hot and wet. There is sun, extreme heat and rain every day. Although daily temperatures rarely rise above 90° F, the daily humidity is always high, leaving everything sticky and damp. North and south of the tropical rainforests are the tropical grasslands called "savannas," the "lands of two seasons" – a winter dry season and a summer wet season. Further north and south of the tropical grasslands or savannas are the deserts. These areas are the hottest and driest parts of the earth, receiving less than 10 inches of annual rainfall. These areas have extreme temperatures between night and day. After the sun sets, the land cools quickly dropping the temperature as much as 50° F.

The **middle latitudes** contain the Mediterranean, humid-subtropical, humid-continental, marine, steppe, and desert climates. Lands containing the Mediterranean climate are considered "sunny" lands found in six areas of the world: lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea, a small portion of southwestern Africa, areas in southern and southwestern Australia, a small part of the Ukraine near the Black Sea, central Chile, and Southern California. Summers are hot and dry with mild winters. The growing season usually lasts all year and what little rain the region gets falls during the winter months. What is rather unusual is that the Mediterranean climate is located between 30 and 40 degrees north and south latitude on the western coasts of countries.

The humid subtropical climate is found north and south of the tropics and is moist indeed. The areas having this type of climate are found on the eastern side of their continents and include the southeastern coasts of Japan, mainland China, Australia, Africa, South America, and the United States. An interesting feature of their locations is the warm ocean currents. The winds that blow across these currents bring in warm moist air all year round. Because of the long, warm summers and short, mild winters, these regions have a long growing season, which means that different crops can be grown several times a year. All contribute to the productivity of this climate type, which supports more people than any of the other climates.

The marine climate is found in Western Europe, the British Isles, the U.S. Pacific Northwest, the western coast of Canada, southern Chile, southern New Zealand and southeastern Australia. A common characteristic of these lands is their proximity to water. The ocean winds are wet and warm bringing a mild, rainy climate to these areas. In the summer, the daily temperatures average at or below 70 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperatures rarely fall below freezing during the winter because of the warming effect of the ocean waters.

In northern and central United States, northern China, south central and southeastern Canada, and the western and southeastern parts of the former Soviet Union, the "climate of four seasons" is found. This humid continental climate has spring, summer, fall, and winter. Cold winters, hot summers, and enough rainfall to grow a variety of crops are the major characteristics of this climate. In areas with the humid continental climate, some of the world's best farmlands and important activities such as trading and mining are found. Differences in temperatures throughout the year are determined by the distance a place is inland, away from the coasts.

The steppe or prairie climate is located in the interiors of the large continents such as Asia and North America. These dry flatlands are far from ocean breezes and are called prairies or the Great Plains in Canada and the United States and steppes in Asia. Although the summers are similar to the humid continental climate, the big difference is in annual rainfall. In the steppe climate, rainfall is light and uncertain, 10 to 20 inches a year, mainly in spring and summer, is considered normal. Where rain is more plentiful, grass grows; in areas of less rain, the steppes or prairies gradually become deserts. These are found in the Gobi Desert of Asia, central and western Australia, southwestern United States, and in the smaller deserts found in Pakistan, Argentina, and Africa south of the Equator.

The two major climates found in the high latitudes are **tundra** and **taiga**. The word tundra meaning marshy plain is a Russian word and aptly describes the climatic conditions in the northern areas of Russia, Europe, and Canada. Winters are extremely cold and very long. For most of the year, the ground is frozen but becomes rather mushy during the very short summer months. Surprisingly less snow falls in the area of the tundra than in the eastern part of the United States. However, because of the harshness of the extreme cold, very few people live there and no crops can be raised. Despite having a small human population, many plants and animals are found there.

The taiga is the northern forest region and is located south of the tundra. The world's largest forestlands are found here along with vast mineral wealth and fur bearing animals. The climate is so extreme that very few people live here; they are not able to grow crops because of the extremely short growing season. The winter temperatures are colder and the summer temperatures are hotter than those in the tundra because the taiga climate region is farther from the waters of the Arctic Ocean. The taiga is found in the northern parts of Russia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Canada, and Alaska with most of their lands covered with marshes and swamps.

In certain areas of the earth, there exists a type of climate unique to areas with high mountains, usually different from their surroundings. This type of climate is called a "vertical climate" because the temperatures, crops, vegetation, and human activities change and become different as one ascends the different levels of elevation. At the foot of the mountain, one finds a hot and rainy climate and the cultivation of many lowland crops. As one climbs higher, the air becomes cooler, the climate changes sharply, and economic activities change to such endeavors as grazing sheep and growing corn. At the top of many mountains, snow is found year-round.

COMPETENCY 1.2 NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES

Skill 1.2a Demonstrate knowledge of Native American tribes living in the various regions of North America

Strong archaeological evidence supports the contention that the ancestors of today's Native Americans and Latin American Indians crossed the Bering Strait from Asia to Alaska, eventually settling in all parts of the Americas; and evidence suggests that some may have arrived from Asia and the Pacific islands via a more southerly transoceanic seafaring route.

Indigenous peoples of North America have been traditionally divided by anthropologists and ethnologists into mutually unintelligible linguistic groups.

Inuit—In the north, from western Arctic Alaska, across Arctic Canada to the Canadian Maritimes;

Dineh—From interior Alaska to the Sonoran Desert in Mexico (Athapaskan, Apache, Navajo, etc.);

Anishinabe (Algonquian)—Eastern woodlands United States and Canada (Ojibwe, Mohican, Abenaki);

Siouan—Midwestern and western Great Plains of the United States and Canada (Lakota, Dakota, Nakota);

Iroquoian—Northeastern United States and southeastern Canada woodlands (Seneca, Oneida, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga);

Nahuatl—Central Mexico (Aztec);

Mayan—Southern Mexico and Mesoamerica; and

Northwest Indian—Southern Alaska Panhandle through Pacific Coastal Canada to the Oregon coast (Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Nitnat).

Skill 1.2b Demonstrate understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural life of Native American peoples

Native American tribes lived throughout what we now call the United States in varying degrees of togetherness. They adopted different customs, pursued different methods of agriculture and food gathering, and made slightly different weapons. They fought among themselves and with other peoples. They had established varying degrees of culture long before Columbus or any other European explorer arrived on the scene.

Perhaps the most famous Native American tribe is the **Algonquians**. We know so much about this tribe because they were one of the first to interact with the newly arrived English settlers in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and elsewhere. The Algonquians lived in wigwams and wore clothing made from animal skins. They were proficient hunters, gatherers, and trappers who also knew quite a bit about farming. Beginning with a brave man named Squanto, they shared this agricultural knowledge with the English settlers, including how to plant and cultivate corn, pumpkins, and squash.

Other famous Algonquians included Pocahontas and her father, Powhatan, both of whom are immortalized in English literature, and Tecumseh and Black Hawk, known foremost for their fierce fighting ability. To the overall Native American culture, they contributed wampum and dream catchers.

Another tribe who lived in the Northeast was the fierce fighting and forward thinking **Iroquois**. They lived in long houses and wore clothes made of buckskin. They, too, were expert farmers, growing the “Three Sisters” (corn, squash, and beans). Five of the Iroquois tribes formed a Confederacy, a shared form of government. The Iroquois also formed the False Face Society, a group of medicine men who shared their medical knowledge with others but kept their identities secret while doing so. These masks are one of the enduring symbols of the Native American era.

Living in the Southeast were the **Seminoles** and **Creeks**, a huge collection of people who lived in chickees (open, bark-covered houses) and wore clothes made from plant fibers. They were expert planters and hunters and were proficient at paddling dugout canoes, which they made. The bead necklaces they created were some of the most beautiful on the continent. They are best known, however, for their struggle against Spanish and English settlers, especially led by the great Osceola.

The **Cherokee** also lived in the Southeast. They were one of the most advanced tribes, living in domed houses and wearing deerskin and rabbit fur. Accomplished hunters, farmers, and fishermen, the Cherokee were known the continent over for their intricate and beautiful basketry and clay pottery. They also played a game called lacrosse, which survives to this day in countries around the world.

In the middle of the continent lived the Plains Tribes, such as the **Sioux, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, Comanche, and Pawnee**. These peoples lived in teepees and wore buffalo skins and feather headdresses. (It is this image of the Native American that has made its way into most American movies depicting the period.) They hunted wild animals on the Plains, especially the buffalo. They were well known for their many ceremonies including the Sun Dance and for the peace pipes that they smoked. Famous Plains people include Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, authors of the Custer disaster; Sacagawea, leader of the Lewis and Clark expedition; and Chief Joseph, the famous Nez Perce leader.

Dotting the deserts of the Southwest were a handful of tribes, including the famous **Pueblo**, who lived in houses that bear their tribe's name. They wore clothes made of wool and woven cotton, farmed crops in the middle of desert land, created exquisite pottery and Kachina dolls, and had one of the most complex religions of all the tribes. They are perhaps best known for the challenging vista-based villages that they constructed from the sheer faces of cliffs and rocks and for their **adobes**, mud-brick buildings that housed their living and meeting quarters. The Pueblos chose their own chiefs. Their government was perhaps one of the oldest representative governments in the world.

Another well-known Southwestern tribe was the **Apache** and their famous leader **Geronimo**. The Apache lived in homes called wickiups, which were made of bark, grass, and branches. They wore cotton clothing and were excellent hunters and gatherers. Adept at basketry, the Apache believed that everything in Nature had special powers and that they were honored just to be part of it all.

The **Navajo**, also residents of the Southwest, lived in hogans (round homes built with forked sticks) and wore clothes of rabbit skin. Their major contributions to the overall culture of the continent were in sand painting, weapon making, silversmithing, and weaving. Navajo hands crafted some of the most beautiful woven rugs.

Living in the Northwest were the **Inuit**, who lived in tents made from animal skins or, in some cases, igloos. They wore clothes made of animal skins, usually seals or caribou. They were excellent fishermen and hunters and crafted efficient kayaks and umiaks to take them through waterways and harpoons with which to hunt animals. The Inuit are perhaps best known for the great carvings that they left behind. Among these are ivory figures and tall totem poles.

COMPETENCY 1.3 EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION

Skill 1.3a Identify the major explorers and the reasons for European exploration

A number of individuals and events led to the time of exploration and discoveries. The Vivaldo brothers and Marco Polo wrote of their travels and experiences, which signaled the early beginnings. Survivors from the Crusades made their way home to different places in Europe. They brought new information about exotic lands, people, customs, and desired foods and goods such as spices and silks.

The Renaissance ushered in a time of curiosity, learning, and incredible energy sparking the desire for trade to procure these new, exotic products and to find better, faster, cheaper trade routes to get to them. The work of geographers, astronomers and mapmakers made important contributions; many studied and applied the work of such men as Hipparchus of Greece, Ptolemy of Egypt, Tycho Brahe of Denmark, and Fra Mauro of Italy.

Portugal made the start under the encouragement, support, and financing of Prince Henry the Navigator. The better known explorers who sailed under the flag of Portugal included Cabral, Diaz, and Vasco da Gama, who successfully sailed all the way from Portugal, around the southern tip of Africa, to Calcutta, India.

Christopher Columbus, sailing for Spain, is credited with the discovery of America although he never set foot on its soil. Magellan is credited with the first circumnavigation of the earth. Other Spanish explorers made their marks in parts of what are now the United States, Mexico, and South America.

For France, claims to various parts of North America were the result of the efforts of such men as Verrazano, Champlain, Cartier, LaSalle, Father Marquette and Joliet. Dutch claims were based on the work of one Henry Hudson. John Cabot gave England its stake in North America along with John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake, and the half-brothers Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

Actually the first Europeans in the New World were Norsemen led by Eric the Red and later, his son Leif the Lucky. However, before any of these, the ancestors of today's Native Americans and Latin American Indians crossed the Bering Strait from Asia to Alaska, eventually settling in all parts of the Americas.

Skill 1.3b Demonstrate understanding of the consequences of early contacts between Europeans and Native Americans

The first documented contact between Europeans and Native Americans that has archaeological evidence to support it was the Viking settlement of eastern Canada in 1000 CE. Under the leadership of Leif Eriksson, the Norse immigrants first encountered hostile Inuit in what is now northeastern Quebec and ventured south to Inland, what is now L'ans aux Meadows, to establish a permanent settlement. Again, their encounter with the Native Americans was hostile. Eventually the incessant warfare between the Viking immigrants and the Native Americans was fought under conditions of relative parity of weapons, compelled the Vikings to abandon the Inland settlement, never to return.

The next recorded contact was in 1492 CE, when Christopher Columbus, a Genoese adventurer commanding a squadron of Spanish ships, landed in what is now believed to be the island of Hispaniola, which is now Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Although the Native American inhabitants were initially curious and welcomed the newcomers, hostilities quickly ensued as the Spaniards raided indigenous villages for gold and slaves. Unlike the Vikings of five centuries earlier, the Spaniards had an advantage in arms. They had firearms; however, many of the Native Americans perished as a result of contracting diseases for which they had no immunity. The European and African immigrants brought such diseases as smallpox, measles, shingles, cholera, and influenza. As successive Spanish expeditions established landfalls in Florida, the Gulf Coast, Mesoamerica and other locations, a similar pattern of the search for gold, the taking of native populations for slaves, and the introduction of new diseases spelled disaster for the Native Americans in their early contacts with Europeans.

Skill 1.3c Demonstrate knowledge of colonization by various European powers

The part of North America claimed by France was called New France. It consisted of the land west of the Appalachian Mountains. This area of claim and settlement included the St. Lawrence Valley, the Great Lakes, the Mississippi Valley, and the entire region of land westward to the Rocky Mountains. They established the permanent settlements of Montreal and New Orleans, thus giving them control of the two major gateways into the heart of North America, the vast, rich interior. The St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi River along with its tributaries made it possible for the French explorers and traders to roam at will, virtually unhindered in exploring, trapping, trading, and furthering the interests of France.

Most of the French settlements were in Canada along the St. Lawrence River. Only scattered forts and trading posts were found in the upper Mississippi Valley and Great Lakes region. The rulers of France originally intended New France to have vast estates owned by nobles and worked by peasants who would live on the estates in compact farming villages—the New World version of the Old World's medieval system of feudalism. However, it didn't work out that way. Each of the nobles wanted his estate to be on the river for ease of transportation. The peasants working the estates also wanted the prime waterfront location. The result of all this real estate squabbling was that New France's settled areas wound up mostly as a string of farmhouses stretching from Quebec to Montreal along the St. Lawrence and Richelieu Rivers.

In the non-settled areas in the interior were the French fur traders. They made friends with the friendly tribes of Indians, spending the winters with them getting the furs needed for trade. In the spring, they would return to Montreal in time to take advantage of trading their furs for the products brought from France, which usually arrived at about the same time. Most of the wealth for New France and its "Mother Country" was from the fur trade, which provided a livelihood for many, many people. Manufacturers and workmen back in France, ship-owners and merchants, as well as the fur traders and their Indian allies all benefited. However, the freedom of roaming and trapping in the interior was a strong enticement for the younger, stronger men and resulted in the French not strengthening the areas settled along the St. Lawrence.