

Section

1

A Regional Crossroads

Main Ideas

1. Texas is considered the crossroads of natural regions.
2. There are four main natural regions found in Texas.

Key Terms

- Sunbelt
- natural regions

Why It Matters Today

Texas has several regions, each with its own distinct landforms and climates. Use current events sources to find information about how natural landforms affect people's lives.



TEKS: 8A, 9A, 9B,
21B, 21C, 22A, 22C, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the natural regions found in Texas.

The Geographer's World

In the 1880s, two ranch workers were exploring a canyon in far West Texas. Looking over the canyon ledge, they saw almost 20 horses, but no people. They climbed down the steep canyon walls but could not find a way to get the horses out. Nor could they figure out how the horses had gotten into the canyon. There was little they could do for the horses. With only a few plants to eat, the animals soon starved. The workers named the spot Dead Horse Canyon.



Common Regional Names

Many places have unusual names that describe some geographic characteristic or feature. For example, the southern region of the United States is often called the **Sunbelt**. This name emphasizes the warm climate that has attracted many new residents to the region. Texas is part of the Sunbelt. Northwestern Texas is often called the Panhandle because the region's shape looks much like the handle of a pan. Other regions of Texas are named for their geographic features. The Redlands is an old name for an area of northeastern Texas that has reddish soil. The Coastal Bend, centered around Corpus Christi, gets its name from an area where the Gulf Coast "bends."

Texas is often divided into regions named for their general locations—East Texas, West Texas, South Texas, or North Texas. These regions have vague boundaries because they are based on perceptions, or

points of view. For instance, people might have differing opinions about the boundaries of West Texas. Some say Fort Worth is in West Texas because the city has close economic and historical ties to the region's cattle industry. Fort Worth, though, is actually located in the eastern half of North Texas.

Other types of perceptual regions are cultural or political regions. These are based on human characteristics. For example, the German Hill Country is a cultural region named for its early German settlers, whose cultural legacy is still seen in the area. Another example of a cultural region is the Metroplex, the area around Dallas and Fort Worth. The region's culture is shaped by its nearness to two large cities.

Political regions are based on the political boundaries into which Texas has been divided, such as cities or counties. Tom Green County is an example of a political region, as is the city of El Paso. The legislative districts into which Texas is divided are also political regions.

Reading Check Summarizing What characteristics of a region help to determine its name?





Natural Regions of Texas

Geographers study **natural regions** to compare and contrast different areas. A natural region is an area with a common physical environment. Natural regions are defined by physical features. These features include types of climate, landforms, plant life, and soil. For travelers, physical features are clues that they are leaving one region and entering another.

Some geographers divide the continental United States into 10 major natural regions. Parts of four natural regions are found in Texas, which is more than in any other state. For this reason, Texas is called the crossroads of natural regions.

The Coastal Plains is one of the largest natural regions in Texas. As part of the larger Gulf-Atlantic Coastal Plain, the region covers the entire coast of Texas and extends a few hundred miles inland. The land along the coast is usually marshy, while the land inland has both dense forests and grassy prairies. The North Central Plains region is part of the larger U.S. region known as the Central Plains. This region is characterized by gently rolling prairies that offer abundant resources for ranching and farming. The Great Plains region is known as one of the flattest areas on Earth. However, the region's flat grassland becomes more rugged in the southern part of the region.

The last of the four regions, the Mountains and Basins, lies west of the Pecos River in Texas. This region is part of the larger Intermountain Basins and Plateaus region of the United States. The region is dry and has a dramatic landscape that includes canyons, mountains, plateaus, and basins. The four natural regions have different climates, landforms, and vegetation. Studying these regions reveals much about life in Texas.

Reading Check Comparing and Contrasting How are the four major natural regions of Texas similar and different?



Section 1 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

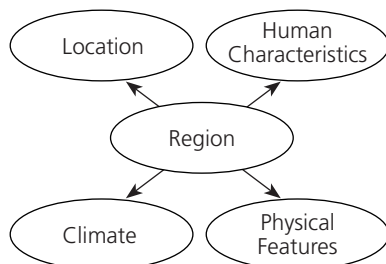
- natural regions

2. Locate on a map:

- Sunbelt
- Coastal Plains
- North Central Plains
- Great Plains
- Mountains and Basins

3. Summarizing

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to explain what types of characteristics are used to define a region.



4. Finding the Main Idea

- Why do some geographers refer to Texas as the crossroads of natural regions?
- List the natural regions found in Texas. To which larger U.S. regions do they correspond?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Contrasting Write a letter to someone in another region. Tell that person about some of the interesting physical and human characteristics of your region. Consider the following:

- the name of your region
- characteristics that make your region similar to and different from other regions