

## Section

# 3

## The North Central Plains

### Main Ideas

1. The Grand Prairie, Cross Timbers, and the Rolling Plains are the subregions found in the North Central Plains.
2. The physical features of the North Central Plains affect industry in the region.

### Why It Matters Today

Ranching is big business in the North Central Plains. Use current events sources to find information about ranching today.

### Key Term

- **transportation center**

## The Geographer's World

In May 1849 U.S. Army major Ripley Arnold and a group of soldiers entered the Central Plains. Their orders were to build a fort on the Texas frontier. They traveled up the Trinity River, passing through a wild and beautiful prairie. Arnold decided to build the fort there. The outpost was named Fort Worth. Early visitors to the fort praised Arnold for choosing such a rich land for the settlement.



**TEKS:** 8A, 8B, 9A, 9B, 10A, 10B, 19D, 21B, 21C, 22D

### myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the North Central Plains region.



### The Grand Prairie

The North Central Plains contains three main subregions: the Grand Prairie, the Cross Timbers, and the Rolling Plains. The Grand Prairie's climate is very similar to that of the Blackland Prairie to the east. However, the soil is thinner than that of the blacklands. The Grand Prairie is covered by grasses, shrubs, and small trees. These grasslands are particularly well suited for raising cattle. Other important livestock in this subregion include goats, hogs, poultry, and sheep. Although the area has an agricultural economy, the thin soil of the subregion limits crop production. Corn, oats, sorghum, and hay are grown primarily as animal feed. Farmers also grow cotton in some areas of this subregion.

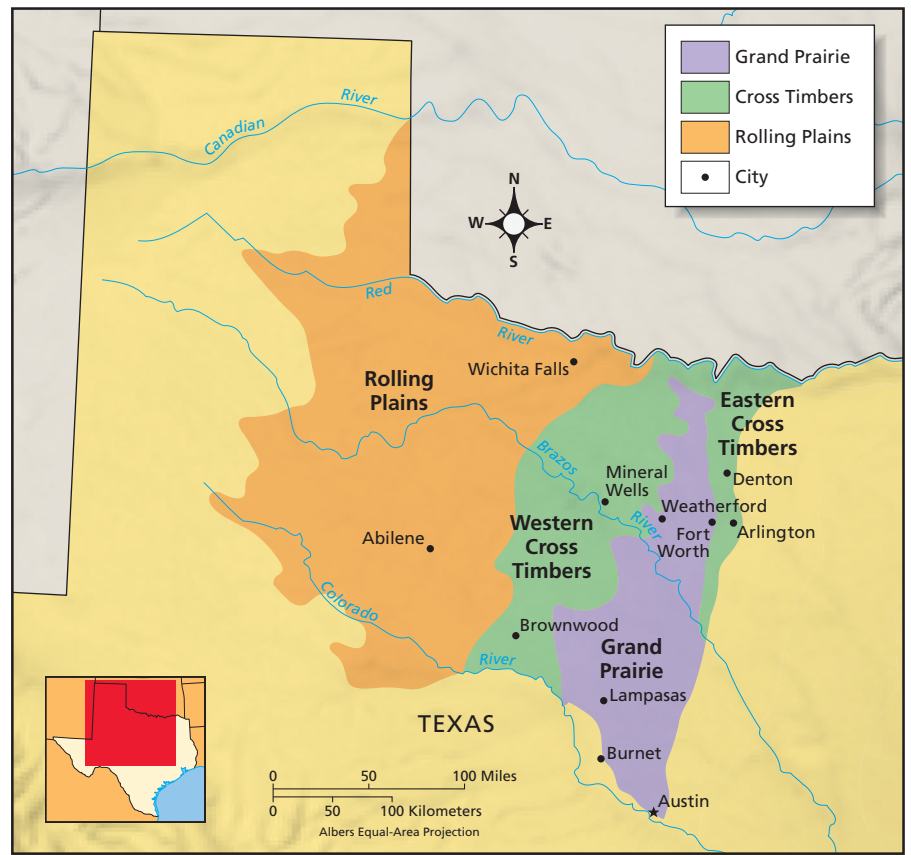
Fort Worth is by far the largest city in the Grand Prairie and is also the largest city in the Texas Central Plains. The city plays a vital role in the subregion's economy. With some of the busiest rail yards in the nation, Fort Worth is a **transportation center**, or place where goods arrive to be shipped to many destinations. The city is also a major

## Subregions of the North Central Plains

**Interpreting Maps** The Cross Timbers subregion forms two belts of forest land that divide the prairies of the Central Plains.

**1. Locate** What two major rivers create natural boundaries to the north and south of the North Central Plains region?

**2. Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** What do you think the number of cities in Eastern Cross Timbers says about the region's settlement patterns?



processing and transportation center for livestock and farm products. Most important, however, are Fort Worth's manufacturing industries. The city specializes in the manufacture of airplanes, electronics equipment, and helicopters.

**Reading Check Evaluating** How do the natural resources of the Grand Prairie affect its economy?



## The Cross Timbers

Early visitors and settlers noted how the Cross Timbers forestland divided the surrounding prairie land. Two belts of forestland made up the Cross Timbers: the Western Cross Timbers and the Eastern Cross Timbers. The Western Cross Timbers lies west of the Grand Prairie. The Eastern Cross Timbers is located between the Grand Prairie and Blackland Prairie. The Eastern Cross Timbers is narrower than the Western Cross Timbers, averaging about 15 miles across.

When farmers moved into the region, they cut down many trees. Some of the native forest vegetation can still be found, however. The Eastern Cross Timbers contains some elms, hickories, and post oaks. Blackjack oak, cedar, hickory, mesquite, pecan, and post oak trees all grow in the drier Western Cross Timbers. The sandy soil of the Cross Timbers absorbs water well, making it a particularly good place for

farming. Farmers grow crops ranging from peanuts to corn, cotton, and hay. Ranchers raise cattle, horses, and sheep there. Since 1917 the subregion has also provided Texas with energy resources such as oil and natural gas.

The Eastern Cross Timbers cuts the Metroplex in half, running between Dallas and Fort Worth. Cities such as Denton have manufacturing plants. While the Western Cross Timbers has no large cities, its towns include Brownwood and Mineral Wells.

**Reading Check Analyzing Information** How have farmers modified the landscape of the Cross Timbers subregion?

## ★ The Rolling Plains

The Rolling Plains are located in the westernmost part of the Central Plains. Prairie grasses cover most of its hilly terrain. The thin soil of the subregion also supports some brush, hardwood trees, and mesquite trees. The Rolling Plains subregion is particularly well suited for cattle ranching. Steep valleys provide shelter for cattle, while the grasslands and rivers provide them with food and water. In areas with poorer vegetation, ranchers raise goats and sheep.

Where there is good farmland, farmers grow cotton, sorghum, and wheat. The Rolling Plains are also a source of oil and natural gas. The population of the Rolling Plains is much smaller than that of subregions in eastern Texas. Abilene and Wichita Falls are its largest cities. Both cities have meat and dairy processing facilities and serve as distribution centers for this subregion. Small market towns are also scattered throughout the area.

**Reading Check Comparing and Contrasting** How is the Rolling Plains subregion similar to and different from the Cross Timbers?

## BIOGRAPHY

**Walter Prescott Webb** (1888–1963)

When Walter Prescott Webb was a child, his family moved from East Texas to the drier Central Plains. The differences between the two regions later influenced his work. After studying history at the University of Texas, Webb wrote and edited more than 20 books. His subjects varied from the Texas Rangers to the frontier to conservation of natural resources. **What was an early influence on Webb's research?**

## Section 3 Review

[hmhsocialstudies.com](http://hmhsocialstudies.com)  
**ONLINE QUIZ**

### 1. Define and explain:

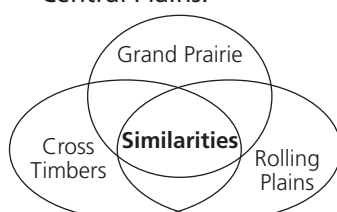
- transportation center

### 2. Locate on a map:

- Grand Prairie
- Cross Timbers
- Rolling Plains

### 3. Comparing and Contrasting

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to compare and contrast the physical and human features of the North Central Plains.



### 4. Finding the Main Idea

- Compare the population distribution of the subregions found in the North Central Plains.
- How have the region's geographic features affected its economy?

### 5. Writing and Critical Thinking

**myWriteSmart**

**Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** Create a journal of a trip across the North Central Plains, explaining how life and the landscape differ between the subregions. Consider the following:

- the physical features of the region
- industries in each subregion