



What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. The United States has four regions—the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West.
2. The United States has a strong economy and a powerful military but is facing the challenge of world terrorism.

The Big Idea

The United States has four main regions and faces opportunities and challenges.

Key Terms and Places

megalopolis, *p. 159*

Washington, D.C., *p. 159*

Detroit, *p. 161*

Chicago, *p. 161*

Seattle, *p. 162*

terrorism, *p. 162*



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the United States today.

The United States Today

If YOU lived there...

You and your family run a small resort hotel in Fort Lauderdale, on the east coast of Florida. You love the sunny weather and the beaches there. Now your family is thinking about moving the business to another region where the tourist industry is important. They have looked at ski lodges in Colorado, lake cottages in Michigan, and hotels on the coast of Maine.

How will you decide among these different regions?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Geography, history, climate, and population give each region of the United States its own style. Some differences between the regions are more visible than others. For example, people in each region speak with different accents and have their favorite foods. Even with some differences, however, Americans are linked by a sense of unity in confronting important issues.

Regions of the United States

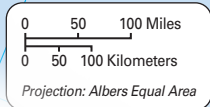
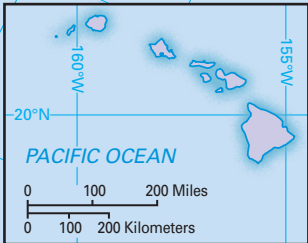
Because the United States is such a large country, geographers often divide it into four main regions. These are the Northeast, South, Midwest, and the West. You can see the four regions on the map on the next page. Find the region where you live. You probably know more about your own region than you do the three others. The population, resources, and economies of the four regions are similar in some ways and unique in others.

The Northeast

The Northeast shares a border with Canada. The economy in this region is heavily dependent on banks, investment firms, and insurance companies. Education also contributes to the economy. The area's respected universities include Harvard and Yale.



Regions of the United States



map zone
Geography Skills

Regions The United States has four geographic and economic regions.

- 1. Locate** What region is located on the Pacific Ocean?
- 2. Analyze** What region does not border Canada?

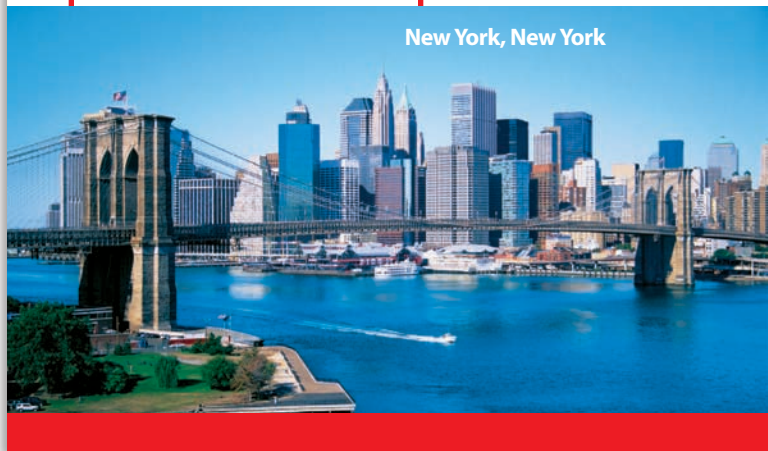
Some natural resources of the Northeast states include rich farmland and huge pockets of coal. Used in the steelmaking process, coal remains very important to the region’s economy. The steel industry helped make Pittsburgh, in western Pennsylvania, the largest industrial city in the Appalachians.

Today fishing remains an important industry in the Northeast. Major seaports allow companies to ship their products to markets around the world. Cool, shallow waters off the Atlantic coast are good fishing areas. Cod and shellfish such as lobster are the most valuable seafood.

The Northeast is the most densely populated region of the United States. Much of the Northeast is a **megalopolis**, a string of large cities that have grown together. This area stretches along the Atlantic coast from Boston to **Washington, D.C.** The three other major cities in the megalopolis are New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

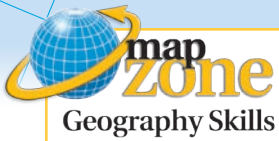
Population of Major U.S. Cities

	City	Population
1	New York	8,336,697
2	Los Angeles	3,857,799
3	Chicago	2,714,856
4	Houston	2,160,821
5	Philadelphia	1,547,607





United States: Land Use and Resources



Human-Environment Interaction This map shows the major land uses and resources of the United States that affect the daily lives of Americans.

- 1. Identify** What major natural resource is found in Pennsylvania?
- 2. Contrast** How is land use in the Northeast different from land use in the West?

At least 40 million people live in this urban area. All of these cities were founded during the colonial era. They grew because they were important seaports. Today these cities are industrial and financial centers.

The South

The South is a region that includes long coastlines along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Along the coastal plains rich soils provide farmers with abundant crops of cotton, tobacco, and citrus fruit.

In recent years, the South has become more urban and industrial and is one of the country's fastest-growing regions. The

South's cities, such as Atlanta, have grown along with the economy. The Atlanta metropolitan area has grown from a population of only about 1 million in 1960 to more than 5 million today.

Other places in the South have also experienced growth in population and industry. The Research Triangle in North Carolina is an area of high-tech companies and several large universities. The Texas Gulf Coast and the lower Mississippi River area have huge oil refineries and petrochemical plants. Their products, which include gasoline, are mostly shipped from the ports of Houston and New Orleans.



1 Farms with fertile soils like this one in Wisconsin cover much of the rural Midwest.



2 Large white containers, shown here at the Port of Houston, store oil from the Gulf Coast.

Millions of Americans vacation in the South, which makes the travel industry profitable in the region. Warm weather and beautiful beaches draw many vacationers to resorts in the South. You may not think of weather and beaches when you think about industry, but you should. Resort areas are an industry because they provide jobs and help local economies grow.

Many cities in the South trade goods and services with Mexico and countries in Central and South America. This trade is possible because several of the southern states are located near these countries. For example, Miami is an important trading port and travel connection with Caribbean countries, Mexico, and South America. Atlanta, Houston, and Dallas are also major transportation centers.

The Midwest

The Midwest is one of the most productive farming regions in the world. The Mississippi River and many of its tributaries carry materials that help create the region's rich soils, which are good for farming. Midwestern farmers grow mostly corn, wheat, and soybeans. Farmers in the region also raise livestock such as dairy cows.

The core of the Midwest's corn-growing region stretches from Ohio to Nebraska. Much of the corn is used to feed livestock, such as beef cattle and hogs.

To the north of the corn-growing region is an area of dairy farms. States with dairy farms are major producers of milk, cheese, and other dairy products. This area includes Wisconsin and most of Michigan and Minnesota. Much of the dairy farm region is pasture, but farmers also grow crops to feed dairy cows.

Many of the Midwest's farm and factory products are shipped to markets by water routes, such as those along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. The other is through the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence Seaway to the Atlantic Ocean.

Most major cities in the Midwest are located on rivers or the Great Lakes. As a result, they are important transportation centers. Farm products, coal, and iron ore are easily shipped to these cities from nearby farms and mines. These natural resources support industries such as automobile manufacturing. For example, **Detroit**, Michigan, is the country's leading automobile producer.

One of the busiest shipping ports on the Great Lakes is **Chicago**, Illinois. The city also has one of the world's busiest airports. Chicago's industries attracted many immigrants in the late 1800s. People moved here to work in the city's steel mills. Today Chicago is the nation's third-largest city.

FOCUS ON READING

As you read about the Midwest, sort the details into three categories.

The West

The West is the largest region in the United States. Many western states have large open spaces with few people. The West is not all open spaces, however. Many large cities are on the Pacific coast.

One state on the coast, California, is home to more than 10 percent of the U.S. population. California's mild climate and wealth of resources attract people to the state. Most Californians live in Los Angeles, San Diego, and the San Francisco Bay area. The center of the country's entertainment industry, Hollywood, is in Los Angeles. Farming and the technology industry are also important to California's economy.

The economy of other states in the West is dependent on ranching and growing wheat. Wheat is grown mostly in Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

Much of the farmland in the West must be irrigated, or watered. One method of irrigation uses long sprinkler systems mounted on huge wheels. The wheels

rotate slowly. This sprinkler system waters the area within a circle. From the air, parts of the irrigated Great Plains resemble a series of green circles.

The West also has rich deposits of coal, oil, gold, silver, copper, and other minerals. However, mining these minerals can cause problems. For example, coal miners in parts of the Great Plains use a **process** called strip mining, which strips away soil and rock. This kind of mining leads to soil erosion and other problems. Today laws require miners to restore mined areas.

In Oregon and Washington, forestry and fishing are two of the most important economic activities. **Seattle** is Washington's largest city. The Seattle area is home to many important industries, including a major computer software company. More than half of the people in Oregon live in and around Portland.

Alaska's economy is largely based on oil, forests, and fish. As in Washington and Oregon, people debate over developing

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

process a series of steps by which a task is accomplished

Olympic National Park

One of the largest sections of coastal wilderness in the United States, shown here, stretches along the Pacific coast in Washington's Olympic National Park.



these resources. For example, some people want to limit oil drilling in wild areas of Alaska. Others want to expand drilling to produce more oil.

Hawaii's natural beauty, mild climate, and fertile soils are its most important resources. The islands' major crops are sugarcane and pineapples. Millions of tourists visit the islands each year.

READING CHECK **Comparing** How is the economy of the West different from the economy of the South?

Changes in the Nation

Because of its economic and military strength, the United States is often called the world's only superpower. In recent years, however, the United States has faced many challenges and changes.

Economy

An abundance of natural resources, technology, and plentiful jobs have helped make the U.S. economy strong. The United States also benefits by cooperating with other countries. The three largest trading partners of the United States are Canada, China, and Mexico. In 1992 the United States, Mexico, and Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. This agreement made trade easier and cheaper between the three neighboring nations.

Still, the U.S. economy has experienced significant ups and downs since the 1990s. In the 1990s the nation experienced the longest period of economic growth in its history. By the end of 2007, the United States faced a recession, or a sharp decrease in economic activity. In this recession, the housing market collapsed, major banks and businesses failed, and an estimated 8.4 million jobs were lost in the United States.

The War on Terror

In the 1990s the United States began to experience acts of terrorism. **Terrorism is the threat or use of violence against civilians to intimidate or cause fear for political or social reasons.** Some terrorists have been from foreign countries, whereas others have been U.S. citizens.

On September 11, 2001, the United States suffered the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's history. Wanting to disrupt the U.S. economy, 19 Islamic extremist terrorists hijacked four American jets. They crashed two into the World Trade Center in New York City and one into the Pentagon.

In response, President George W. Bush declared a "war on terrorism." He sent military forces to Afghanistan, to kill or capture members of a terrorist group called al-Qaeda, which had planned the 9/11 attacks. The United States then turned its attention to Iraq. President Bush viewed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein as a serious threat to Americans. In March 2003 Bush sent U.S. troops into Iraq to remove Hussein from power.

Today world leaders are working with the United States to combat terrorism. In the United States, the Department of Homeland Security was established to prevent terrorist attacks on American soil. Many other countries have also increased security within their borders, especially at international airports.

Government

The 2008 U.S. presidential election pitted Republican senator John McCain of Arizona and his running mate, Alaska governor Sarah Palin, against the Democratic ticket of Senators Barack Obama of Illinois and Joe Biden of Delaware. McCain, a distinguished military veteran, was more experienced than Obama, but his support for the unpopular war in Iraq proved costly. Obama urged the



The 2008 presidential campaign of Barack Obama captured the imagination of many Americans

President Obama succeeded in passing health care reform legislation and oversaw the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Slow economic growth, unemployment, and high federal deficits were major issues during Obama's successful bid to win a second term in 2012.

READING CHECK Summarizing What issues were most important in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW In this section, you learned about the geographic features, resources, and economic activities found in different regions of the United States. You also learned that the economy and terrorism are two important issues facing the country today. In the next chapter, you will learn about Canada, our neighbor to the north.

withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq as soon as possible. The two men also differed over how best to deal with the economic crisis and health care reform. Helped by record-setting voter turnout, Obama won the election, becoming the nation's first African American president.

Section 3 Assessment

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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Define** What is a **megalopolis**? What major cities are part of the largest megalopolis in the United States?

b. Compare and Contrast How is the modification of the physical environment in the Midwest similar to and different from the modification of the physical environment in the South?

c. Elaborate How are the regions of the United States different from one another?
- a. Define** What is **terrorism**? What terrorist attack occurred in September 2001?

b. Explain How did a recession affect the U.S. economy in 2007?

c. Elaborate What steps are the United States and other countries taking in an attempt to combat world terrorism?

Critical Thinking

- Finding Main Ideas** Use your notes to help you list at least one main idea about the population, resources, and economy of each region.

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Population				
Resources				
Economy				

FOCUS ON VIEWING

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- Thinking about the United States Today** Identify and explain the geographic factors responsible for the patterns of population in the regions of the United States that you have read about in this section. What key words, images, and objects might represent what you have learned?