

Lesson 5

Reasons to Study Geography

This lesson will look at some of the reasons why people study geography. You may begin to see how it can help you in school, a career, and life.

Curiosity

People have always been curious about the Earth. That is one reason why they want to learn more about geography. You may decide to explore a stream because you are curious. Or your curiosity may be strong enough for you to want to travel around the world. When people travel and observe, they learn about geography firsthand. However, no one has time to visit *every* place on Earth. Most people find out about other places by reading newspapers, magazines, and books; studying maps; watching television and movies; and using the Internet.

Intellectual Development

Knowing geography can help you develop mentally and academically. Students learn geography to help them prepare for useful and successful lives. Today, we must think on a global scale. Geography gives us a background for this way of thinking. People need to know the location of major physical and human features of the Earth. They should know world patterns of population, occupations, government, climate, land forms, natural resources, and trade routes. Every person should know geographic facts about their country, state, or locality. People also need to see how they depend on and influence the Earth. Geography teaches us

how to interpret maps, charts, and graphs. More importantly, knowing geography helps us understand world events in the context of where they occur.

Intelligent Citizenship

We need to know about geography to understand many public problems. Government officials need to know geography to make decisions about local and national affairs. They use this knowledge to decide issues like where to set city limits and how to control water supply and irrigation.

Being an informed citizen is more than just knowing about your own city, state, or country. Each person plays a part in world affairs—either directly or indirectly. For example, international trade affects almost every person on Earth. Think about the products you buy that were made in another country. The fresh fruit that you ate for lunch may have been grown in Chile. The board game you played last weekend may have been made in China.

Other Fields of Knowledge

People can use geographic knowledge and methods in other fields. For example, geographers add to our knowledge of history by placing people and events in the right geographic settings. For example, to understand the military strategies during the Civil War, you would need to know about the land in the states where the war took place. Likewise, during World War II, geographers helped the government plan to use natural resources most effectively.

Intelligent Travel

Geographic knowledge makes it more rewarding to travel. It helps you better understand any area in the world that you might visit. For example, geography might tell the meaning of the rounded stones that you see along a riverbank in Spain. Or it might help you understand the broad pattern of the Appalachian Mountains in the eastern United States.

In Business

Geography is useful in many fields of business. For example, manufacturers must know where to get raw materials. They need to know the means and routes of transportation, as well as the needs of their customers. When they ship materials, they may need to use special packaging to withstand the weather of the rainy tropics or the sunny desert. Farmers must know the soils and layout of their land. They must also be familiar with the weather and climate.



Reasons to Study Geography Activity A

Directions: Answer the following questions based on what you learned in this lesson.

1. Why are you interested in studying geography?

2. List and describe four benefits of knowing and understanding geography.

a.

b.

c.

d.

3. Why is geographic information important to government officials?

4. How can geographic knowledge help you when you travel? Give an example.



Reasons to Study Geography Activity B

Directions: Imagine that you own a produce company in the United States that ships fresh fruit to China and Japan. Use a world map from any atlas found online or in your school or local library to locate China and Japan. Then answer the following questions.

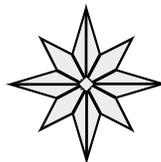
1. How will you ship your product (by water, land, air)?

2. Given your location and the location of your markets in Asia, what route(s) will you take?

3. How does the fact that your product is fresh and perishable affect how you ship it?

4. How could weather and/or climate affect your product during shipping?

5. Do you need to use any special packaging to protect your product? Explain your answer.



End of Lesson 5