



Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World

Today's Geography: Definitions and Frameworks

"The purpose of geography is to provide 'a view of the whole' earth by mapping the location of places." - *Ptolemy, 150 AD*

"Geography is the study of the earth's landscapes, peoples, places and environments. It is, quite simply, about the world in which we live. Geography is unique in bridging the social sciences (human geography) with the natural sciences (physical geography)." - *Royal Geographical Society, 2011*

- Our last Pre Trip Module focused on the geography basics of latitude, longitude, meridian, equator and hemispheres. These are important tools in understanding our world.
- Current definitions of geography include much more than these basics (see above and right). This Pre Trip Module will look at the several current categorizations of geography and ways it can be taught and understood.
- These definitions will assist us in viewing geography in the context of the people, history, culture, environment and nature associated with places, as well as the interpretation of the past and application to the future.
- We will explore why the study of geography is critical to kids in today's global world and how *Trekking the Planet* plans to present it during our expedition.

Geography Definition

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines geography as follows:

1. The study of the earth and its features and of the distribution of life on the earth, including human life and the effects of human activity.
2. The physical characteristics, especially the surface features, of an area.

source: [The Free Dictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)

One Discipline - Many Views

- Geography has been taught throughout history, first as a way to understand maps and locations.
- Today, geography is viewed as much more than just maps. Different frameworks and guidelines have developed to aid teachers in presenting geography to their students.
- This module presents several recent standards, primarily used in the United States and United Kingdom.



The US Five Themes of Geography

In 1984, the National Council for Geographic Education and the Association of American Geographers published a set of guidelines as a framework for teaching geography. The five themes of geography found in that publication, and adopted by many American classrooms, are:

1. Location

- Relative Location
- Absolute Location

2. Place

- Human Characteristics
- Physical Characteristics

3. Human - Environmental Interactions (HEI)

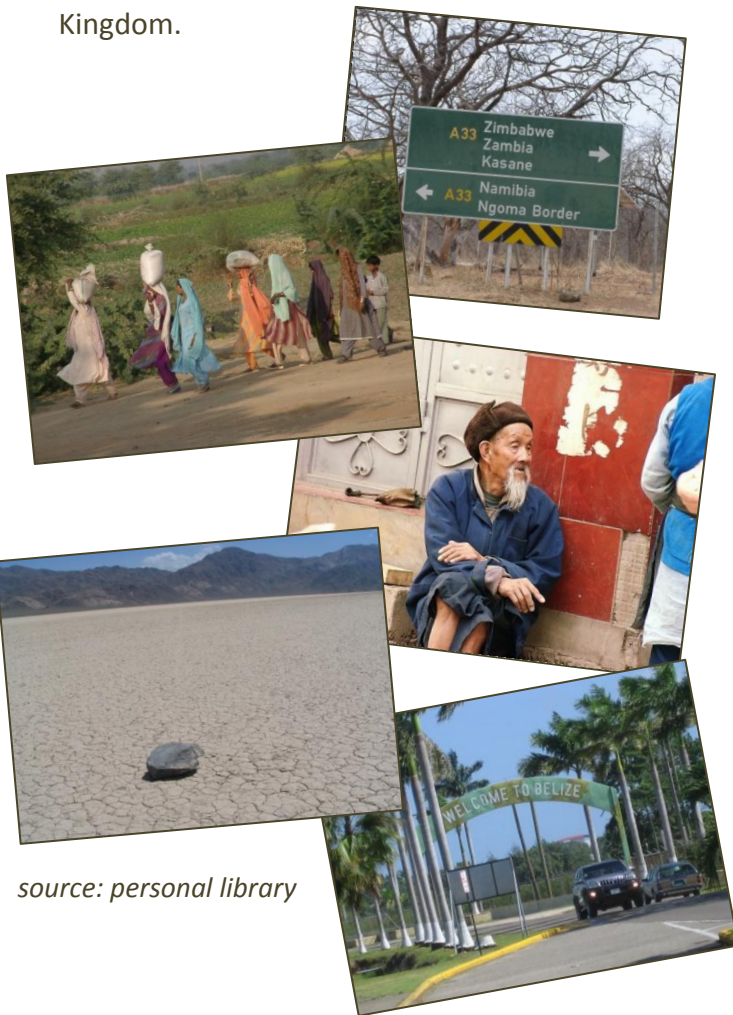
- Humans adapt to the environment
- Humans modify the environment
- Humans depend on the environment

4. Movement

- People
- Goods
- Ideas

5. Regions

- Formal - official borders
- Functional - connections
- Vernacular - perceptual, but not formal ("Tri-City", "Mid-West")



source: personal library

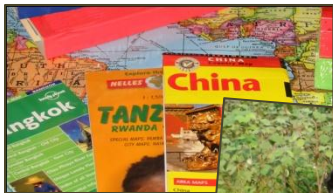
The UK National Geography Curriculum

This describes statutory subject teaching requirements to standardize public schools content. A multi-year review of all subject curriculum is currently taking place. The geography Primary Curriculum (to age 11) is as follows:

- Geographical Enquiry and Skills
- Knowledge and Understanding of Places
- Knowledge and Understanding of Patterns and Processes
- Knowledge and Understanding of Environmental Change and Sustainable Development
- Varied levels of study of countries and themes by Key Stage

The geography Secondary Curriculum (to age 16) focuses on the following areas:

- **Key Concepts**
 - Place, Space, Scale
 - Interdependence
 - Physical and Human Processes
 - Environmental Interaction and Sustainable Development
 - Cultural Understanding and Diversity
- **Key Processes**
 - Geographical Enquiry
 - Fieldwork and Out-of-Class Learning
 - Graphicacy and Visual Literacy
 - Geographic Communication



source:
personal library



The US National Geography Standards

In 1994 a set of National Geography Standards of were distributed by the National Council for Geographic Education as an update to the previous framework with a more detailed set of six standards and 18 principles for students to master.

1. The World in Spatial Terms (three principles)

Focuses on learning to read maps and using geographic tools.

2. Places and Regions (three principles)

Encompasses the understanding of the physical and human components of places and the influence of culture on regions.

3. Physical Systems (two principles)

Spotlights both physical processes and ecosystems that shape the Earth.

4. Human Systems (six principles)

Reviews migrations, economics, settlements, cultures, cooperation and conflicts among peoples and how humans modify the environment.

5. Environment and Society (two principles)

Focuses on how physical systems affect human systems and in resource use and importance.

6. The Uses of Geography (two principles)

Applies geography as a means to interpret the past and present and plan for the future.

A 21st Century View of Geography

- In a global world, geography is important for a number of reasons, not limited to:
 - **Business** - Today, many products are designed not only locally but internationally as well. A product cannot be sold if it does not meet the needs of the buyer and if it is not sensitive to the cultural norms of a society.
 - **Governments** - Geography provides the tools to take into account factors, such as agriculture and land use, population trends, projections and migrations and cultural patterns of language and ethnicity, as new infrastructure is built or new trade is established.
 - **Countries** - Developing an appreciation for natural and environmental factors, including climate change, and their effects on our present and future.
 - **The World** - By understanding our differences and similarities as cultures and as people, we gain a greater awareness, tolerance, and understanding of humanity.

In the spirit of the geography learning frameworks presented and their application in the 21st century, we will organize expedition **Weekly Education Modules** as follows:

- **Where are we now?** - map overviews of our current location (including its latitude and longitude)
- **People and Culture** - a human geography summary
- **Nature and Environment** - a physical geography summary
- **Our Plans** - what we are doing and where we will be next

More Information

- <http://www.una.edu/geography/statedepted/definitions.html>
- <http://geography.about.com/od/teachgeography/a/18standards.htm>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_themes_of_geography
- <http://funsocialstudies.learninghaven.com/articles/fivethemes.htm>
- http://www.geography-site.co.uk/pages/links/geog_orgs.html

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