# The Five Themes of Geography

## Location, Place, Human-Environment Interaction, Movement, and Region

The five themes of geography were created in 1984 by the National Council for Geographic Education and the Association of American Geographers to facilitate and organize the teaching of geography in the K-12 classroom. While they have been supplanted by

[National Geography Standards](http://geography.about.com/od/teachgeography/a/18standards.htm), they provide an effective organization of the teaching of

geography.

**1. Location**

Most geographic study begins with learning the location of places. Location can be absolute or relative.

Absolute location provides a definite reference to locate a place. The reference can be [latitude and longitude](http://geography.about.com/cs/latitudelongitude/a/latlong.htm), a street address, or even the [Township and Range](http://geography.about.com/library/weekly/aa090897.htm) system.

Relative location describes a place with respect to its environment and its connection to other places.

**2. Place**

Place describes the human and physical characteristics of a location.

Physical characteristics include a description such things as the mountains, rivers, beaches, topography, and animal and plant life of a place.

Human characteristics include the human-designed cultural features of a place, from land use and architecture to forms of livelihood and religion to food and folk ways to transportation and communication networks.

**3. Human-Environment Interaction**

This theme considers how humans adapt to and modify the environment. Humans shape the landscape through their interaction with the land; this has both positive and negative effects on the environment.

**4. Movement**

Humans move, a lot! In addition, ideas, fads, goods, resources, and communication all travel distances. This theme studies movement and migration across the planet.

**5. Region**

Region divides the world into manageable units for geographic study. Regions have some sort of characteristic that unifies the area. Regions can be formal, functional, or vernacular.

Formal regions are those that are designated by official boundaries, such as cities, states, counties, and countries. For the most part, they are clearly indicated and publicly known.

Functional regions are defined by their connections. For example, the circulation area for a major city area is the functional region of that paper.

Vernacular regions are perceived regions, such as "The South," "The Midwest," or the "Middle East;" they have no formal boundaries but are understood in our [mental maps](http://geography.about.com/cs/culturalgeography/a/mentalmaps.htm) of the world.

http://geography.about.com/od/teachgeography/a/5themes.htm