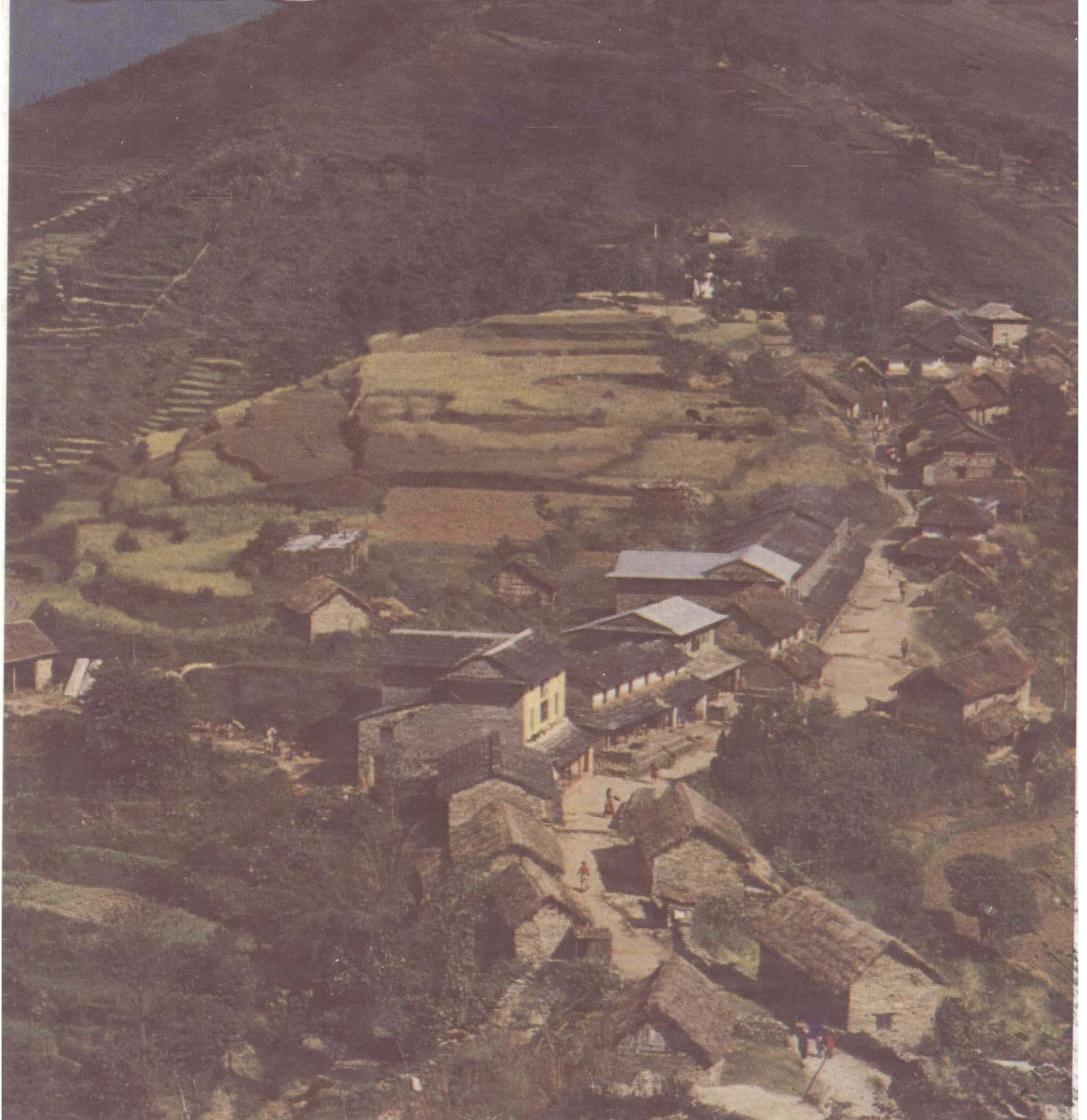


WORLD GEOGRAPHY



Scholastic WORLD GEOGRAPHY

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Introduction

You and Your World



Scholastic **WORLD GEOGRAPHY**



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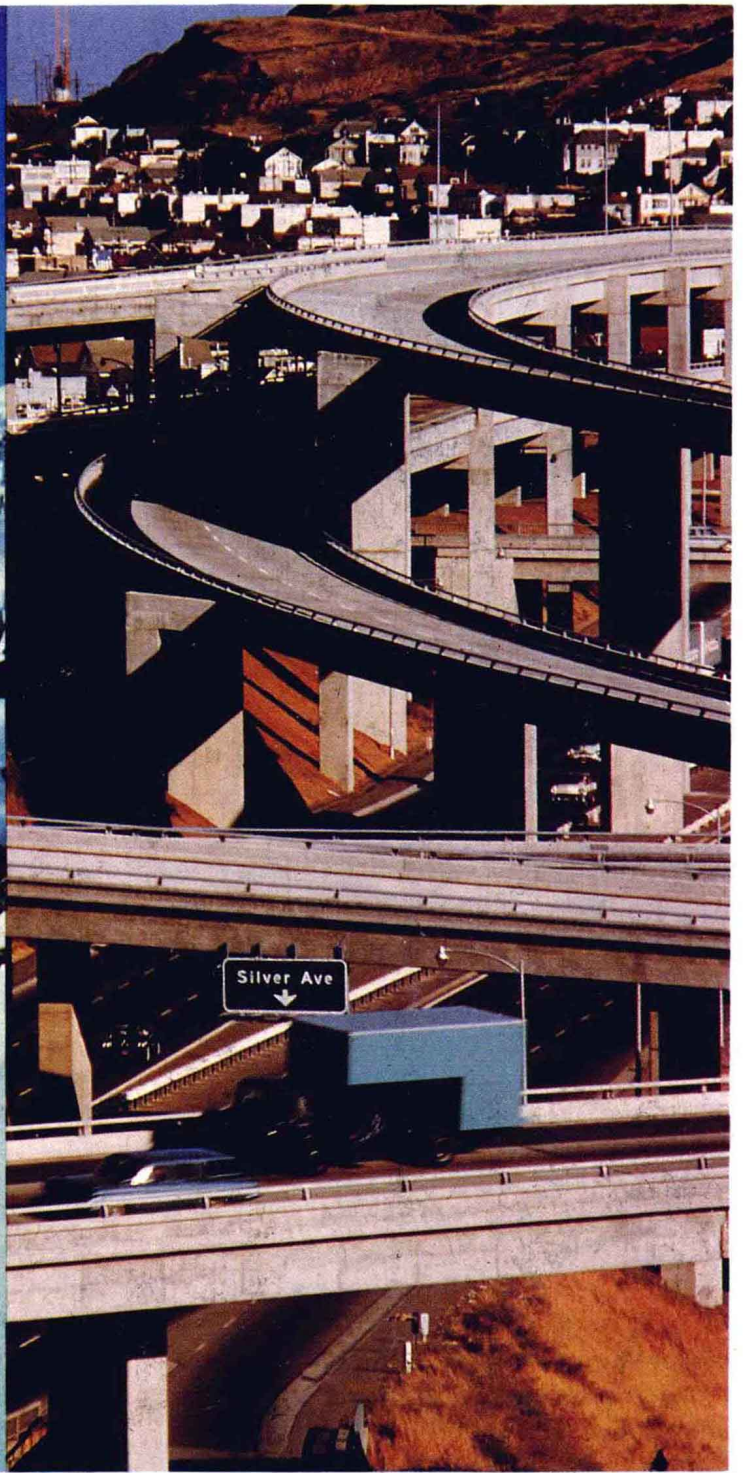
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Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the fair! We have some really exciting events for you today. There'll be contests in swimming, ice skating, and surfing on our lake. On the same track, there'll be a downhill ski race and an attempt to break the world's record for the mile run. You'll also see displays of our finest local crops — bananas, coffee, and tomatoes. You'll see our local wildlife — polar bears, camels, alligators, and walruses."

Take a careful look at this announcement. Is there anything wrong with it?

The answer is *yes*, nearly everything in it is wrong. There's no place on Earth where all those events and displays could be brought together at one time. Swimming needs water above freezing, while skating needs water frozen into ice. Surfing needs big, rolling ocean waves. Downhill skiing needs a snowy slope, while a mile run needs a smooth flat track. Bananas grow in hot, steamy lowlands. Coffee plants do best in tropical highlands. Tomatoes prefer cooler places. Polar bears and walruses live in cold regions, while camels and alligators need warmth.

The **environment** (surroundings) in which people and animals live sets limits on what they can do. Within those limits, however, people have a wide range of choices. In many places, for example, they can choose to ski *and* skate. In many places, they can grow tomatoes along with apples, cabbages, and countless other food crops.

Often they can find ways around the limits. They can build an indoor skating rink for times when there's no natural ice. They can breed a plant that will grow outside its normal environment. They can change a dry environment by bringing in water.

All over the world, there is give and take

between the environment and the people who live in it. The environment shapes people's lives — but people also reshape the environment. This happens where you live too. Check for yourself by answering the following questions.

- Is there a river near where I live? If so, is there a bridge that lets me cross it? How else could I cross?
- Is it easy to travel to and from my neighborhood? Are there highways, railroads, or air routes going in many directions?
- Do I ever have the chore of sweeping up dead leaves or clearing away snow? Or aren't there any dead leaves or snow where I live?
- Do I often have to think about wearing boots or a raincoat? Or can I nearly always be sure it won't rain?
- What kinds of animals live in my area? Are some of them wild? Are others looked after by people?
- What outdoor sports are possible? Can people go swimming, surfing, ice skating, or skiing?
- Suppose I want to stay in my neighborhood when I finish my schooling. Is there a wide choice of jobs? Or is there just one kind of job for most people?

These questions deal with only part of your environment. But they are enough to give you an idea of how it influences your life.

What makes up the environment? How and why does it differ from place to place? Just how important a part does it play in people's lives? How do they change it? Answering these questions is the task of **geography**.

The word *geography* means "writing about Earth." It is first of all the study of the **land** and the various forms or shapes that the

land can take around the world. Geography is also the study of **climate** (the kind of weather a place has over a period of time). It is the study of the land's **resources** (the water we drink, the plants and animals we grow for food, the minerals we dig out of the ground, and other useful things). Geography is also the study of the **people** who live on the land. It shows how they use, depend on, and change the land. In short, geography shows how land and people affect each other.

As you can see, geography covers a lot of ground. Sometimes special names are given to its different areas. The study of land and water is called **physical geography**. The study of people and their ways of life in different places is called **human** or **cultural geography**. The study of the way people use Earth's resources is called **economic geography**. There are other kinds of geography too, but these three cover most of the field.

Why Geography?

The purpose of this book is to give you a basic understanding of the geography of today's world. This understanding can be helpful to you in many ways.

Look back at the questions on page 12. They show how geography can affect the place where you live, the way you live, and your future choice of jobs. Geography also affects the things you need and use in your daily life. Food, water, clothing, housing, lighting, heating, fuel for transportation, and many other items depend in some way on Earth's resources — they depend on Earth's geography.

Geography also helps you to understand news events and how they may affect you. In today's world, things that happen thousands of miles away may affect you as much

as events in your own community. Very often the land and its resources are involved. For example, the U.S. needs to buy oil from other nations. Suppose a nation doesn't want to sell oil to the U.S., or sets a very high price. You will soon see the result in long lines or higher prices at your neighborhood gas station.

There are many other examples. Earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters may lead to worldwide calls for help. A natural disaster may also reduce the supply of an important food crop or mineral resource. On the other hand, the discovery of a new source of minerals in a far-off part of the world may boost trade in our nation. Conflicts between distant nations may threaten world peace. Cooperation (nations working together) may strengthen it. Both conflicts and cooperation often arise over the land and its resources. One way or another, geography plays a large part in your life.

This Book

The main part of this text is divided into 10 units, with two to five chapters in each unit. The first unit looks at Earth as a whole. It takes you into space to see the surface of Earth. Then it brings you closer to Earth to discover Earth's resources. You will find out how different environments on Earth can influence the people who live there. You will also learn the basic ways in which people make use of their environments.

Units 2 through 9 take you to different regions of the world. (A **region** is an area of land where most people have enough in common to be considered as a group, different from other peoples.) In these regional units, you will see how the basic ideas of Unit 1 work in practice for different people

in different places. You will also learn how these people and places are connected with the U.S. and your own way of life.

The final unit, Unit 10, once again looks at Earth as a whole. It focuses on some important changes, problems, and hopes that you have come across in your journey from region to region. It helps you to shape your own ideas on where Earth — and all of us who live on it — may be headed.

Making the Most of It

If you flip through the pages of this book, you'll see that it contains a large number of photos, maps, charts, and diagrams. These illustrations are some of the tools that will help you to understand geography. They give certain kinds of information that can't be put into words easily. But like any other tool, they are helpful only when you know how to use them. That's why this text also includes a series of "Geography Skills" lessons. There are two or more lessons with each chapter in Unit 1, and one lesson with each chapter in the rest of the book. These skills lessons explain the tools of geography, step by step.

At the end of every chapter, you'll find a section called "Your Local Geography." Here you'll find suggestions for comparing and contrasting other places around the world with your own community.

In each unit, you'll find a section called "Sidelights," which is a kind of surprise package. It may be part of a diary, a song, a

novel, a letter, or other kind of writing. These sidelights have one thing in common: They all involve geography. Reading them, you'll see how geography has a way of throwing light on unexpected areas of life.

Two features of this book will help you find your way through it:

- The Contents at the front of the book lists first the titles of each unit and chapter, and tells you the page on which each begins. It also lists the Geography Skills lessons. Then there are separate listings for the maps and charts.
- The Index at the back of the book helps you to find any place or topic dealt with in the text. All the places and topics are listed in alphabetical order, and the numbers of the pages on which they are discussed are shown to the right of the listing. The Index also tells you how to pronounce each place-name.

Near the back of this book, you'll find many pages of reference material:

- The Atlas consists of maps covering the whole world.
- The Glossary explains the meaning of key words used in the book. The words are listed in alphabetical order.
- The Checklist of Nations gives many basic facts and figures about the countries in each region of the world.

Until you're familiar with all of the book's features, you can check back to this page. You're now ready to discover more about the planet you live on.

1

Planet Earth

