高等学校泛读与泛听双功能新型教材

美国视野

Geography of the USA

美国地理环境概述

原著：[美国] ALAN. A. LEW
编译：周宜君　黄莹

Sichuan University Press
四川大学出版社

美国视野

高等学校泛读与泛听双功能新型教材

Geography of the USA

美国地理环境概述

原著：[美国] ALAN. A. LEW
编译：周宜君　黄莹

Sichuan University Press
四川大学出版社

责任编辑：黄新路
责任校对：夏　宇
封面设计：米茄设计工作室
责任印制：李　平

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国地理环境概述 /（美）刘阿兰著；周宜君，黄莹编译. —成都：四川大学出版社，2011.7
ISBN 978-7-5614-5386-5

Ⅰ.①美…　Ⅱ.①刘…②周…③黄…　Ⅲ.①地理环境-概况-美国　Ⅳ.①X21

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字（2011）第 153692 号

书名　**美国地理环境概述**
GEOGRAPHY OF THE USA

原　　著　[美国]ALAN A. LEW
编　　译　周宜君　黄　莹
出　　版　四川大学出版社
地　　址　成都市一环路南一段 24 号 (610065)
发　　行　四川大学出版社
书　　号　ISBN 978-7-5614-5386-5
印　　刷　郫县犀浦印刷厂
成品尺寸　210 mm×285 mm
印　　张　18.75
字　　数　549 千字
版　　次　2011 年 11 月第 1 版
印　　次　2011 年 11 月第 1 次印刷
定　　价　45.00 元

Preface

We are please to bring you this bilingual book on the geography of the Unites States of America. We hope that this book will help students in China to understand the great geographic diversity of the USA, while also helping them to improve their American English language skills and general global perspectives. This book is based on a class that I teach at Northern Arizona University on the geography of the US. We have translated each chapter into Chinese to make the book more accessible to Chinese students.

There are three parts to the book. The first part (Chapter 1) is a general overview of basic geography concepts. The second part (Chapters 2 and 3) provides an overview of some of the key elements of the human and physical geography of the US. The remainder of the book (Chapters 4 to 13) is essentially a geographic tour of the US, which we divide into ten geographic regions.

To enhance the reader's understanding, we have included maps and figures to help students to visualize the concepts discussed in each chapter. Virtual field trips (photographs) of each of the ten regions are available online at http://www.geog.nau.edu/courses/alew/ggr346/ft/ (you can also try this short link: http://bit.ly/GeogUSA). In addition, there are websites at the end of every chapter to help expand the reader's knowledge beyond the textbook.

This textbook will be of special interest to the following readers:

(1) Students in China who are studying English and who are planning to study abroad in the USA;

(2) Students in China majoring in geography, international tourism, international migration, international economics and trade, international politics and relations, and similar subject areas;

(3) Researchers and "armchair geographers" (people who like to read about foreign lands) who are interested in the geographical and historical development of the USA; and

(4) Foreigners in China who want to improve their Chinese readings skill with the use of bilingual reading material.

Unlike most of the geography textbooks in China, which tend to just state statistics and describe geographic features, this book focuses on the interaction between humans and their geographic environment. While also introducing professional geography concepts, you will feel like you are listening to stories when you read the book. In part, this is because the book is based on my class lectures at Northern Arizona University.

We hope you enjoy the book and that it will expand your knowledge of both English and the world.

Alan A. Lew, Ph. D.
Department of Geography, Planning and Recreation
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

前　言

随着经济全球化和中美关系的不断改善和发展，中美两国官方与民间的相互交往日益增多并不断深入，提高英语水平、了解美国国情成为越来越多的中国人的需求。

2001 年 8 月，国家教育部颁发了《关于加强高等学校本科教学工作，提高教学质量的若干意见》，提出了十二项提升本科教学质量的举措，其中之一就是“积极推动国内高等学校使用包括英语在内的外国语教学，积极创造条件使用英语等外国语进行公共课和专业课教学”，对双语教学提出了具体要求。培养同时具备专业知识和英语交流能力，并且拥有国际视野的复合型人才成为众多高校的共识。《美国地理环境概述》双语教材为我们了解美国国情、提高英语水平、拓展国际视野提供了一个较理想的学习样本和交流平台。

本书是在英文版“美国地理”资料的基础上翻译、编著而成的。它原为美国北亚利桑那大学地理、规划与休闲系教授 Alan A. Lew 的“美国地理”课程讲义，根据中国人的学习特点，本书译著者对其进行了适当的删减和修改，使之更加适合教师进行双语教学和学生自学。全书分为三大部分：第一部分主要介绍基本地理概念和地理知识；第二部分简要介绍美国的自然地理和人文地理概况；第三部分阐述美国各大主要区域的基本地理特征，并简要分析其发展演进的地理过程。

本书通过简洁的标题对内容加以串连，以突出主题，着重体现人类与地理环境的相互作用、相互影响，以促进读者对人地关系的感悟和体味；配合运用地图描述空间特征，运用图表化繁为简，并在每一章末尾附上了相关网站供读者进行拓展性阅读。全书简明扼要，使读者能够在短时间内对美国地理概况形成比较全面系统的认识。

《美国地理环境概述》不仅用纯正的英语讲述美国的地理环境特征，提供英汉互译的翻译参考，而且还提供了一种崭新的地理教材样本。长期以来，我国的区域地理教材习惯于单纯叙述地理环境的各个构成要素及区域特征。而美国学者则将视角集中在地理环境形成的来龙去脉以及人类活动与地理环境的相互作用方面。因此，《美国地理环境概述》一书虽然不乏一些地理专业词汇，但读起来却会有一种听故事的感觉，让你看到一幅幅地理和历史的生动画卷。

本教材的适合对象：

（1）高等学校英语专业及留美预科班的英语学习者；

（2）地理（自然地理、人文地理、美国地理）、国际旅游、国际人口迁移、国际经济与贸易、国际政治与对外交往、中外文化交流、中美关系等相关专业的学习者；

（3）关注美国政治经济、历史文化、地理环境的研究者、出国人员和普通民众；

（4）希望通过英汉对照的方法提高汉语水平的来华外籍人士。

本书原作者是美国北亚利桑那大学地理、规划与休闲系 Alan A. Lew 教授，中文部分由三峡大学经济与管理学院周宜君副教授整理、翻译，三峡大学外语学院英语教师黄莹负责全书的校对工作。文中的阅读指导及课后关键概念提炼由周宜君、黄莹共同完成。

由于有关条件的局限以及中美文化的差异，本书难免存在一些不当和瑕疵，恳请读者不吝指正。

周宜君

2011 年 1 月 11 日

Contents

1 What Is Geography?

什么是地理

地理学主要研究地球表层自然要素与人文要素相互作用及其形成演化的特征、结构、格局、过程和地域分异，以及人类与地理环境之间的关系等，是一门既古老又年轻的学科。它具有较强的区域性、空间性和综合性。地理学主要分为自然地理、人文地理和区域地理三大分支，美国地理只是属于区域地理的一个部分。虽然如此，我们仍然需要从地理学的一些基本概念起步。

[Pre-reading Activities]

What's region? What's the difference between place and space? And what about site, location, and situation?

1.1 Regional Geography

1.1.1 Traditional Regional Geography

The content of this text focuses on the physical form and formation of the natural and human landscapes of the US and Canada overall (Chapters 2 and 3) and in each of the regions covered (the remaining chapters). The only exception to this pattern is in this first chapter, which is an overview of key geographic concepts used throughout the text, each region of North America. This is a very traditional approach to geography and can at times seem somewhat irrelevant to the heated political and social issues of the present day, which are hot topics of research and discussion among many geographers. However, it is difficult to cover the full range of geography-related issues within the boundaries of any one textbook and still maintain a sense of coherence. For this reason, the current text prefers to focus on the fundamentals of traditional regional geography.

1.1.2 New Regional Geographies

In recent years there has been some discussion in geography of what has come to be known as "new regional geography." This is an approach to regional geography that focuses on social development, power relationships and contestations over places, and the globalization of cultures, economies, and societies, among other issues. This is an activist approach to place, and just as geography synthesizes knowledge from many other disciplines, the new regional geographies also incorporate similar perspectives from other fields. In particular, the approach often includes a significant political and economic critique of the forces that affect contemporary migration, the gap between the rich and poor, and the globalization and homogenization of the contemporary landscapes.

1.2 Geography: Place and Space

Geography deals with two basic areas of inquiry about the world around us: place and space. Geography seeks to accurately portray the character of places. Place location (where is it?) is fundamental to understanding a place's characteristics. Place description (what is it like?) is part of the art of

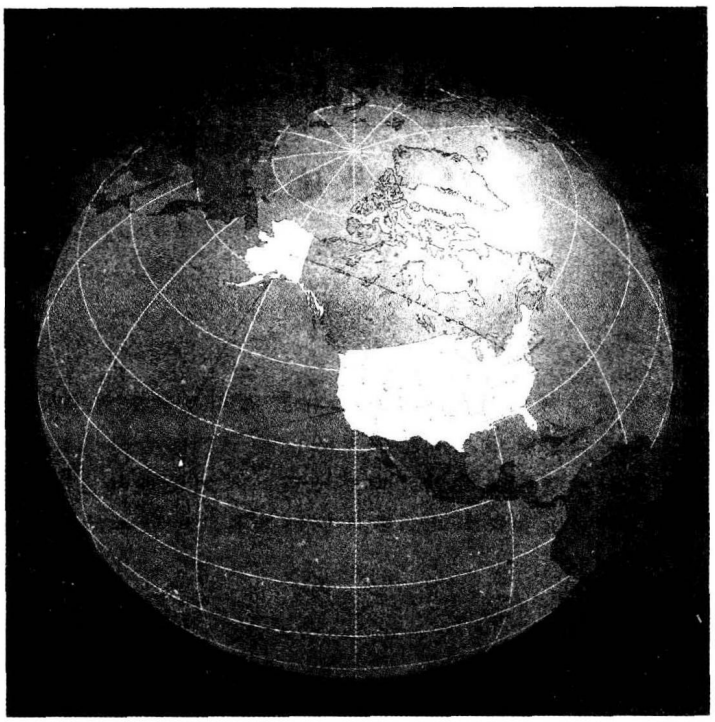


Figure 1-1 Map—The Fifty States

Source: US Geological Survey (USGS), public domain.

geography. These are the types of questions that most people would readily identify with geography. Geographers attempt to develop an awareness and understanding of the qualities of a place that make it special. We say that places that exhibit these special qualities have a strong sense of place; they are places that have a personality and significance and are often remembered long after we have left them. All places have personalities, although the globalization of culture often results in more and more places that seem the same—inauthentic and lacking in sense of place (sometimes referred to as placelessness). The character of a place is the result of its physical setting, its relative location, and the people and events that shape its evolution. Places tend to exhibit a particularly strong sense of place when place identity and the personal identity of its residents are so intertwined as to be virtually inseparable. Thus, geographers are interested in the relationship between people and the places they create and occupy. (See more on Sense of Place below.)

1.2.1 Geographic Place

Places are points of presence. A place exists and has a location. Geographic places exist in geographic space—typically some location on the surface of the earth. Other, nongeographic places also exist. These are mostly fictional places, but can also be virtual places. In this book, the word "place" always refers to geographic places. All places, whether geographic or not, share in common (1) some means of distinguishing one place from another (for geographic places, this may simply be a location address, but typically also includes physical and cultural landscape features such as mountains and buildings) and (2) a relationship with other places within its spatial realm (for geographic places, you can at least measure a distance between any two places on the planet, although many other types of relationships also exist, such as economic and cultural).

1.2.2 Geographic Space

Space is another central or transcendent theme of geography. Besides knowing where a place is and

what it is like, geography seeks to determine the reason places are located where they are and why they develop the characteristics that they have. The answer often involves understanding how places relate to one another over space. Examples of spatial relationships between places include transportation routes and communication linkages (both of which have changed over time with technological developments), ethnic ties (as people migrate from one place to another), and political associations (which often involve complex historical processes). The distribution of something over an area is called its spatial pattern or spatial organization. The word spatial here refers to geographic space, rather than outer space. Geographic space is the three-dimensional space that encompasses the livable surface of the earth.

*** Spatial Science**

Geography is sometimes called a spatial science because of the importance of spatial relationships in a geographic understanding of the world. This spatial aspect of geography is most easily seen and perhaps understood in the production of maps and map-like diagrams—most of which show the distribution of one or more variables over space. Maps are also identified by the general public as being a fundamental aspect of geography. How these patterns came to be and how they function are key questions in geography. Geography is essentially the study of the spatial organization of the world in which we all live.

1.2.3 Site

Geographers use the term site to refer to the immediate physical setting of a place. This includes the topographic or physiographic features that shape the visible surface of the earth (mountains, plains, rocks, and soils), as well as the environmental opportunities of a particular location (such as access to a navigable river or a waterfall that can be used to generate electrical power). The site characteristics of San Francisco Bay, for example, include its having a very large water body that is both connected directly to the ocean, and well protected from ocean storms. These characteristics have contributed to the development of major port facilities and accompanying international financial activities. Its site characteristics have also fostered a linear settlement pattern around the southern part of the bay. (The opposite of site is situation, which is discussed in more detail below.) One of a place's site characteristics is its absolute location.

1.2.4 Absolute Location and Latitude and Longitude

When we ask "where is it?" what we often want to know is "what is its absolute location?" The absolute location of a place never changes. Most absolute locations are based on some type of location system. Street addresses are one type of absolute location system. There are many different types of street addressing systems, but usually a specific house address and street number (accompanied with a city or another community name) identifies only one, specific location. Lines of latitude and longitude are another example of an absolute location system. Latitudes and longitudes are imaginary lines drawn on the surface of the earth to identify locations. There is one, and only one, specific location on the surface of the earth for each set of latitude and longitude coordinates. Latitude lines run parallel to one another in an east-west direction. The longest line of latitude is the equator (which is at 0 degrees latitude). As one moves north and south of the equator, the lines of latitude crossed get shorter and shorter, until the north or south pole is reached (at 90 degrees north or south latitude), where they have no length at all. Longitude lines run north-south. They all touch both the north and south poles, from which they spread out away from one another as they approach the equator. Unlike lines of latitude, longitude lines are all the same length.

1.2.5 Situation

Situation refers to the position of a place as it relates to other places. Much of the predominance of the city of New York within the US, for example, can be attributed to its situation in relationship to the agricultural and industrial Midwest. When the Midwest was first being settled for agriculture, and later industry, in the 1800s, the Hudson and Mohawk River Valleys, which empty into New York Harbor, were the most convenient way of moving goods from the Midwest through the Appalachian Mountains, and to the East Coast. Situational characteristics may be thought of as external relationships that a place has with other places, while site characteristics are the internal characteristics of a place.

1.2.6 Relative Location

Relative location is closely related to the concept of situation. It is the opposite of absolute location and can be defined as the location of a place in comparison with another place. As such, it can change when circumstances change. For example, as you travel through a city, the location of objects to where you are is constantly changing. Your relative location to them is constantly changing. Relative location can also change in response to innovations. The changing nature of manufacturing employment in the US, from heavy industry to high-tech and service industries, has decreased the relative location advantage of the Great Lakes industrial region and has increased the relative attractiveness of the Sunbelt states.

1.3 Form and Function

An example of how place (or site) and space (or situation) work together is in the shaping of the form and function of human settlements. The form of a city refers to the shape that it exhibits on the land, which can sometimes be seen on a simple road map. Some cities are very circular, others are linear, and others still are more rectangular. Most larger metropolitan areas are multi-nodal—they have many different commercial centers, each of which may have a form of its own. The location and distribution of different types of land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) are also part of the form of a city. The functions of a city are the predominant activities that take place there. Usually the emphasis is on economic activities. Using indices of predominant functions, cities can be classified as being primarily agricultural, educational, industrial, recreational, or commercial centers. For example, Washington DC, is the country's premier administrative city, while New York is the financial center of the US.

1.4 Geography as a Holistic Science

Geographers are interested in the study of earth as the home of humankind. It is a venerable discipline, recognized as a fundamental realm of knowledge by the early Greeks. One aspect of geography that makes it distinct is that it is the only traditional academic discipline that unifies the social sciences and the physical sciences in a comprehensive manner. A geographic understanding of North America requires this type of holistic approach, including knowledge of the physical processes that create the landforms, climates, and vegetation as we see and experience them and the social processes that shape this continent's diverse human settlements and regional identities. To achieve this, geographers divide their study of place and space into two general fields: physical and human. The physical environment and human culture come together to shape the landscape of a place or region. Thus, knowledge of both the physical sciences (primarily the earth sciences) and social sciences is required for a sound geographic education. In geography, these are taught by geographers who specialize in one of the two major subfields of the discipline: physical geography and human geography.

1.4.1 Physical Geography and Human Geography

Physical geography is divided into three basic areas of emphasis: geomorphology (landforms and

Figure 1-2 Map—Physiography of the US

Source: US Geological Survey (USGS), public domain.

physiography), climatology (climates and weather patterns), and biogeography (flora and fauna). Human geography, on the other hand, is not as easily broken down into subdisciplinary areas. In very general terms, however, it is possible to identify an economic geography branch (including population, urban, transportation, and other related geographies) and a cultural geography branch (including historical geography, environmental perception, and human ecology). In all areas of geography, there is considerable crossover with other disciplines (such as economics, history, and biology); however, geographers tend to maintain a unique perspective in their emphasis on place phenomena.

GUIDE:

What tools do we have to assist our study of geography? Do you know how to use the map?

1.4.2 Maps, Map Scale, and GIS

Maps are generalized "representations" of places. Map scale is important in identifying the place being represented. A small scale map will show a large area, but with everything appearing very small, such as a map of the entire North American continent. A large scale map will show a very small area, but with all the features appearing large, such as on a map of a particular neighborhood in your community. Small scale maps show far less detail, with many more objects being deleted, than do large scale maps, which can sometimes show every tree and sign on a city block. Both physical and human geographers use maps, which, like place and space, are fundamental to geographic analysis. More sophisticated map analysis today is accomplished using geographic information systems (GIS), which combine computer maps with large databases, such as the census of population, to view spatial patterns and relationships, and to perform spatial statistics.

*** Cartography and Map and Image Interpretation**

Map making, referred to as cartography, and map reading are fundamental techniques common to both physical and human geography. Map reading is the ability to interpret processes by looking at the lines, dots, and shaded areas that constitute most maps. If you can tell where the oldest part of a city is located by simply looking at the street and block pattern on a map, then you are reading a map as a geographer would. One other technique which geographers use is the interpretation of aerial photographs and satellite images—also known as "remote sensing." While cartography involves a generalization of selected elements (mostly roads and buildings) on the earth's surface, aerial images (from airplanes and satellites) show an exact replication of everything on the surface of a place. The high degree of detail that appears in many of these images requires special techniques, typically on a computer, to interpret their complex patterns.

GUIDE:

How do people divide the region?

1.4.3 Regional Geography and Regions

All of these various aspects of geography (physical, human, and technical) are brought together in the study of places and regions. For this reason, regional geography has been referred to as a "virtuoso performance"—it requires familiarity with the breadth of the discipline and competence in pulling together the diverse strands of knowledge to create a sense of place or regional character. Some argue that there is a significant difference between a place and a region, in that a region comprises relationships between places that are separated by large "blank" spaces (for example, of highways connecting two cities), while places do not have this characteristic. Scale * (see above) is, of course, the most important fact here, and the dividing line between region and place can sometimes be slippery. A metropolitan area (comprising many cities that grow next to one another) can be considered a place, at a national or international scale, or a region, at a local scale. Another definition of a region is that it is an area of land that is larger than a place and which contains a common characteristic, such as the growing of corn. Most regions are single, contiguous areas, although there are exceptions to this when large bodies of water divide portions of a region, such as the way the Great Lakes divide Michigan.

1.4.4 Defining Regions and Subregions

Regions are used to analyze the larger areas of the world in which we live. There are many ways in which space can be regionalized. Examples include political regions, economic regions, physical regions, and cultural regions. For example, Chapter Two of this book presents an overview of the physical regions of the US and Canada. Geographic regions, like geography in general, attempt to synthesize these different features into a total regional scheme.

A regional geography of the US and Canada breaks these two countries into their major subregions for more detailed analysis. These subregions, in turn, can be further separated out into smaller units, if appropriate for analysis. Each region or unit, however, contains some collection of shared characteristics. Sometimes, these shared characteristics are more physical in nature; at other times, they are more social. The geographic regions of North America, around which the chapters of this book are constructed, are described below. These geographic regions include both physical and human characteristics. For some regions, the human characteristics are emphasized more, while other regions may be based more on

physical characteristics. There is no fixed rule regarding this, and regional definitions can and do change through time as people's image and perception (see below) of them change. In general, regions with sparse populations are more likely to be defined in terms of their physical geographic features, while those with high population densities, such as the northeastern Atlantic seaboard, are characterized more by their cultural and economic characteristics.

(1) Core Area and Transition Zone

Most of the discussion of different regions in this text focuses on core area characteristics. The core area is the place where the shared characteristics that are used to define a region are most predominant. The core area of one region is distinctly different from the core area of a neighboring region. Transition zones are areas between two regions that share characteristics of both to some extent. The characteristic(s) defining each region are generally weaker in the transition zone. For example, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains rise above Denver, Colorado, and clearly mark a distinct boundary between the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains, with almost no transition zone. You are either in the Rocky Mountains or you are on the Great Plains—there is no question of being between them. On the other hand, the boundary between the Great Plains and the Midwest Interior Lowlands is a broad transition zone, lacking a clearly demarcated line. Similarly, the division between the South and the Midwest is not easily defined. Missouri, for example, is included in the South in this text, although it could justifiably have been included in the Midwest or the Great Plains, because it shares core area characteristics with all three of these regions.

(2) Homogeneous Regions

Homogeneous regions contain a common characteristic that is found throughout an area in equal degree. The common characteristic may be one or a group of characteristics. The Corn Belt and Wheat Belt are typical examples. Physical regions, such as the Atlantic Coastal Plain, are often homogeneous in character. A political entity, such as a country or state, which by definition encompasses its own citizens within its boundaries, is a homogeneous region. Also known as "uniform" and "formal" regions, homogeneous regions have more clearly defined boundaries (i. e. , more narrow transition zones) than do nodal regions.

(3) Nodal Regions

Also known as "functional" and "focal" regions, nodal regions have a central point at which the characteristic defining the region is most predominant. The farther away from this central point, the less predominant is the characteristic. A city's area of economic and social influence is usually nodal. The farther one moves away from a major city, the less is its economic influence, until one moves into the influence area of another major city. The area that is still within the sphere of influence of a nodal center is known as its hinterland or periphery. Nodal regions have well-defined core areas and poorly defined boundaries, with broad transition zones. The "core-periphery" model of economic development, which assumes that the development of periphery locations is controlled by decision makers in core locations, is fundamentally the description of a nodal region.

(4) "A Priori" Regions

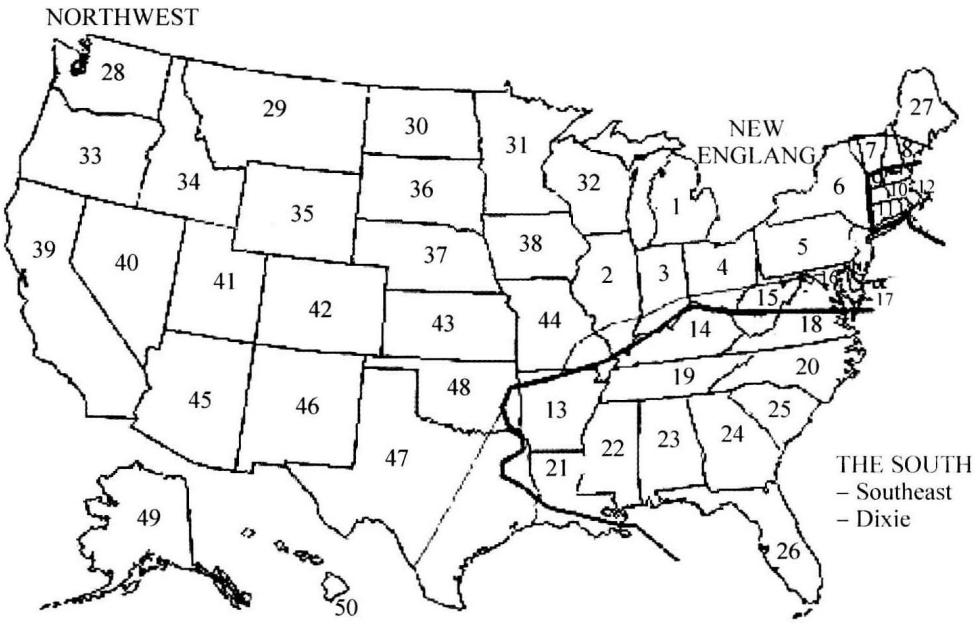
A priori region is a region that is arbitrarily drawn on the surface of the earth. Political units, such as states, provinces, and countries, are the most common type of a priori region. Sometimes, the political boundary separating one country from another is not related to any natural or human geographical boundary but is instead decided by negotiation or expedience. In the US and Canada, the straight lines that form the borders of many of North America's western political units (state and country lines that totally ignore mountains, valleys, and other terrain features) are the result of land division regulation established by European settlers at a time when the only people to have ever seen them were American Indians.

*** Environmental Perception and Behavior**

Environmental perception is an area of study that is a cross between geography and psychology, and sometimes philosophy. It deals with how people perceive and, as a result, behave in the environment they live in. For example, the northern Europeans initially perceived the Great Plains as a useless environment, referring to it as the "Great American Desert." Alternatively, the Spanish coming from Mexico recognized the region as having great potential for cattle raising, similar to what they were used to in central Spain. In another example, many Native Americans today still consider communal ownership of land as far more appropriate than private ownership of land, which has predominated among Europeans from their first settlement in North America. The way people perceive and behave in the world reflects many aspects of their culture, experiences, socioeconomic background, and value system and has a lot to tell us about the cultural landscapes they create.

(5) Perceptual Regions

What part of North America do we call the Midwest? What about the Northwest? Where is the Southwest? The answer to these questions depends on who you ask and when you ask. When the US was a much smaller country, the "Northwest" was the area from Ohio to Wisconsin, and the Southwest was Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. For Canadians, the "Northwest" has always been a far colder part of their land than many would want to live in. When the far west was first being settled in the 1880s, the name "Midwest" was the name given to what we today call the Great Plains. In this century, the term "Midwest"



1. Michigan 2. Illinois 3. Indiana 4. Ohio 5. Pennsyivania 6. New York 7. Vermont 8. New Hampshire 9. Massachusetts 10. Connecticut 11. New Jersey 12. Rhode Island 13. Arkansas 14. Kentucky 15. West Virginia 16. Delaware 17. Maryland 18. Virginia 19. Tennessee 20. North Carolina 21. Louisiana 22. Mississippi 23. Alabama 24. Georgia 25. South Carolina 26. Florida 27. Maine 28. Washington 29. Montana 30. North Dakota 31. Minnesota 32. Wisconsin 33. Oregor 34. Idaho 35. Wyoming 36. South Dakota 37. Nebraska 38. Iowa 39. California 40. Nevada 41. Vtah 42. Colorado 43. Kansas 44. Missouri 45. Arizona 46. New Mexico 47. Texas 48. Oklahoma 49. Alaska 50. Hawaii

Figure 1-3 New England, the South and the Northwest Map (by Alan A. Lew)

has moved eastward, while, in the US, the terms "Northwest" and "Southwest" have moved westward. The reasons for these shifts have to do with popular perceptions and terminology that gradually develop and change with time. (This is also why every geography textbook will define its regional boundaries in a slightly different way.) How we define regions today is different from the way they were defined a hundred years ago, and they will probably not be the same a hundred years from now. In particular, the vast areas of low population density in the western US, which is called the "Mountain West" in this book, will likely become more differentiated into cultural subregions as populations increase in the next century.

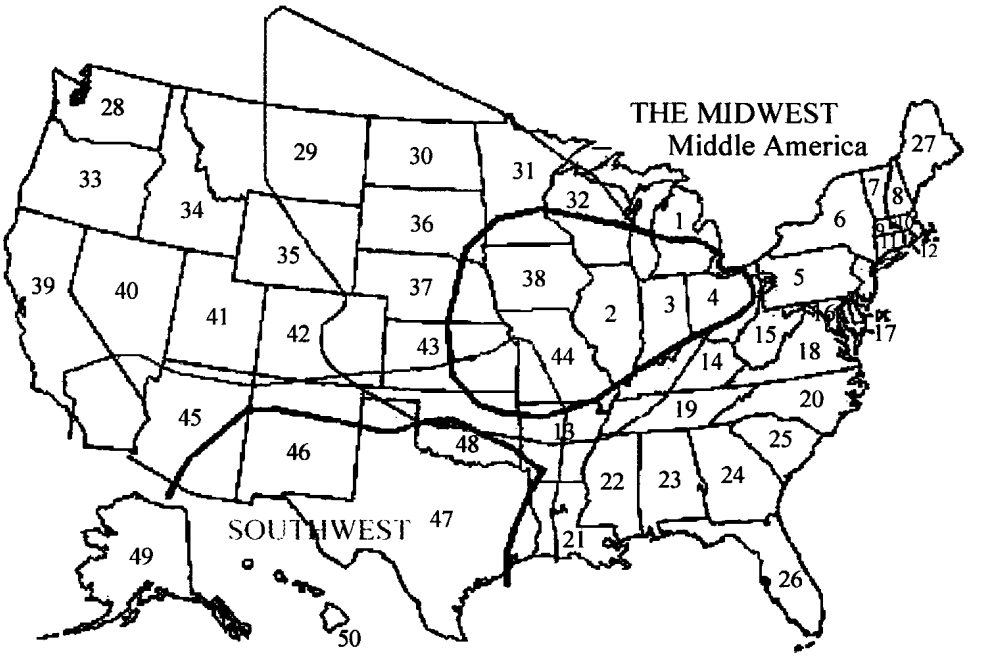


Figure 1-4 The Midwest and the Southwest Map (by Alan A. Lew)
(Stats' name see Figure 1-3)

GUIDE:

What's the most distinctive place in your memory? Have you ever seen any places with placelessness? Are there any relations between McDisney and sense of place?

1.5 Sense of Place and Placelessness

An important, but sometimes difficult to understand, aspect of how we perceive places is the concept of sense of place. Geographers use this term to describe the characteristics of a place that make it distinctive and memorable. Typically, a place that has a strong sense of place is one that is steeped in history, rich in symbolism, and held in high esteem by many people. Much of the attraction of Europe as a tourist destination for North Americans is that the older cities of that continent have a strong sense of place. Many North American communities have this sense as well, although in North America it can sometimes be obscured by its opposite: placelessness. Placeless landscapes are those that look and feel the same, no matter where they are located. A highway strip shopping center is visually the same whether it is located in Los Angeles, California, or Buffalo, New York. A fast-food chain restaurant looks and feels the

same in Miami as it does in Montreal, Canada or Capetown, South Africa. The North American landscape is rife with placelessness, which is not necessarily bad but is an important concept to understand.

Sense of place includes how well the community is situated within the natural environment in which it is located; how well it relates to and exhibits to its historical and cultural development and uniqueness; and how the people within the community live lives that reflect a sense of community cohesion and purpose.

1.5.1 Globalization and Localization

The world has become a much smaller place in recent decades due to advances in technology and the opening up of global trade, both of which have contributed to an increase in placelessness worldwide. Through television and movies, values and experiences are shared across cultures and continents. Through the Internet, people today are able to communicate more closely with friends and colleagues on the opposite side of the globe than in the building next door. Transnational corporations (TNCs—producing in two or three countries) and multinational companies (MNCs—with offices in three or more countries) are often cited as the new force bringing about this global transformation by operating beyond the political and geographic confines of traditional nation-states. While there is some truth to this, it is also true that nation-states are as important as they have ever been, and a trend that is directly opposed to globalization seems to have become particularly significant in recent years. Increasing localization is emerging at the same time as globalization, as communities seek to express their individuality and local autonomy. In some places, this has resulted in demands for greater political autonomy or even independence (such as in Eastern Europe and on indigenous lands in the US and Canada). In other cases, it can be seen in such things as the rapid rise in local breweries (brew-pubs) across North America in the 1990s.

1.5.2 Postindustrial and Post-Fordist Society

The trend toward localization has been attributed to a fundamental change in North American society—the transition from an industrial economy (in which more people work in industries than any other economic sector) to a postindustrial economy (with more people employed in service jobs than industrial jobs). It is argued that accompanying this economic transition there has been a transition from an emphasis on assembly-line, mass-produced merchandise (which Henry Ford first perfected in building the model-T automobile) to one on products that are more personalized and individualized, known as post-Fordist. This is reflected in an increasingly diverse array of products (including landscape experiences) designed to match the interests of smaller markets of people who are willing to pay for a more personal approach. Again, local brew-pubs are an example of this phenomenon.

1.5.3 Postmodernism and Historic Preservation

Another concept that is related to these economic trends is postmodernism, which came out of architecture but has since been expanded to encompass a broad realm of values in contemporary society. Architecture plays a major role in shaping the visual landscape. Modernism was the total rejection of historical approaches to architectural design and was an architectural trend that dominated much of the later nineteenth- and twentieth-century building construction in North America. Skyscrapers are typical of the modernist approach. Postmodernism is rejection of modernism and is sometimes viewed as a return to or an embracing of more historical approaches to building design, as well as social values. This is most clearly seen in the historic preservation movements that first became popular in North America in the 1960s. On a broader scale, a postmodern world is also more relativist (everything can and should be judged on its own merit, rather than based on universal moral values), and thus we can select from not only the past, but also from an eclectic and diverse realm of elements of different cultures around the world. Thus, postmodernism brings together both the local and the global and, hopefully, does not create something that

is placeless in the process.

*** McDisney fication**

McDisney fication is a postmodern opposite of Sense of Place. McDisney fication was coined by Professors George Ritzer and Allan Liska to describe the McDonaldization (another Ritzer term) of service industries (fast and mass produced) and the Disneyfication of tourism (the epitome of which is Las Vegas). McDonalds restaurants and the Disney theme parks are considered "hypermodern" model of (1) Efficiency: getting the most for one's money, which usually means seeing, doing and eating as much as possible; (2) Predictability: safety, known cleanliness and service standards, plus the ability to communicate in a common language; (3) Calculability: precisely defined itineraries, with no unexpected costs or other surprises; and (4) Control: service employees whose behavior is tightly controlled by scripts (telling them what to say and how to react), and the preferred use of advanced technologies to control employees and clients/guests. These models now influence many aspects of the contemporary modern landscape and lifestyle. Examples of McDisneyfied places include: theme parks, cruise ships, Las Vegas hotels and casinos, themed shopping malls and strip malls, some chain and local restaurants (e. g., the Rainforest Cafes), and a variety of public entertainment spaces. The very success of these environments seem to indicate that this is what people want. The holiday lifestyle is becoming *omnipresent in the American (and global) landscape. Yet, these McDisneyfied places are as* placeless as the less entertaining mass shopping and work environments that are even more widespread in the modern American city.

GUIDE:

As we all know, there are 50 states in America. How about geographic regions and subregions? Let's start to travel around the country.

1.6 Geographic Regions and Subregions of the US

In discussing the diverse ways that regions can be defined, and the major role perception plays in these definitions, it should not be surprising that geographers do not always agree on the best way to divide the North American continent from a regional geography perspective. The problem is that, while geographic regionalization requires a broad, holistic view, at some point a decision must be made to emphasize one basic characteristic over another. This decision is sometimes easy, and other times not. Different decisions made by different geographers result in different regionalizations. This text tries to:

(1) Limit the total number of regions into which North America is divided so as not to confuse the overall representation of the continent. (Remember that, throughout this book, North America refers to the US and Canada only, as previously stated.)

(2) Define the regions of North America from a mix of human and physical characteristics. The predominant characteristics of each region vary, although physical geography plays an important role throughout.

With this in mind, the major regions of this text include:

The Eastern Seaboard

Chapter 4 The Mid-Atlantic