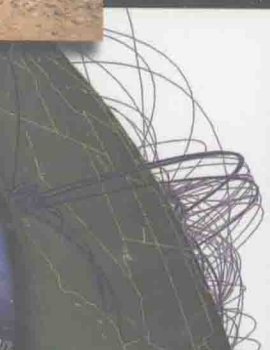
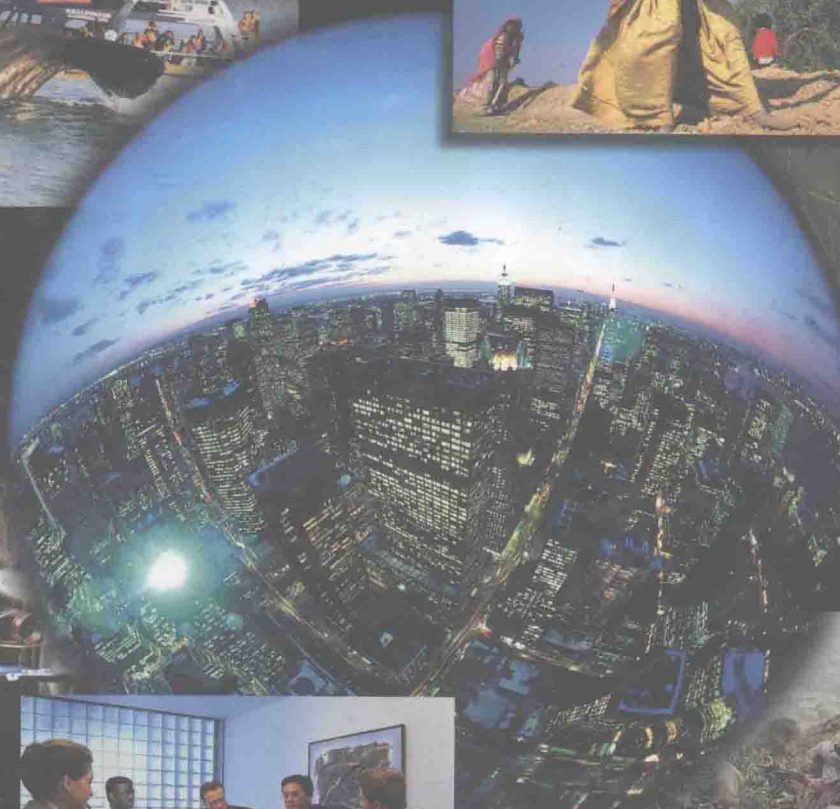


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Second Edition

PLACES AND REGIONS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

Human Geography

SECOND EDITION



PAUL L. KNOX • SALLIE A. MARSTON

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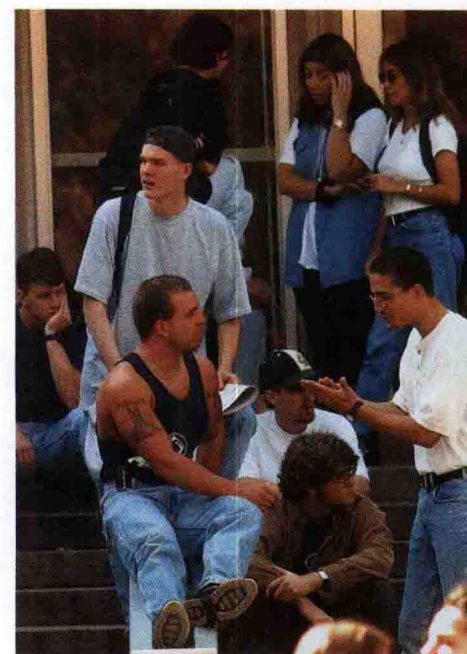


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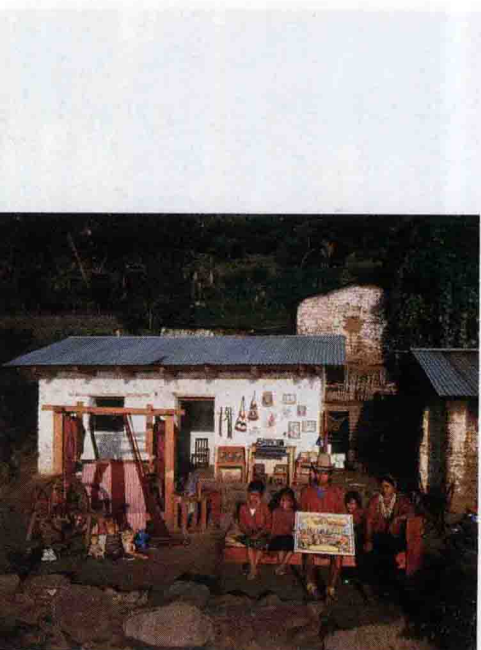


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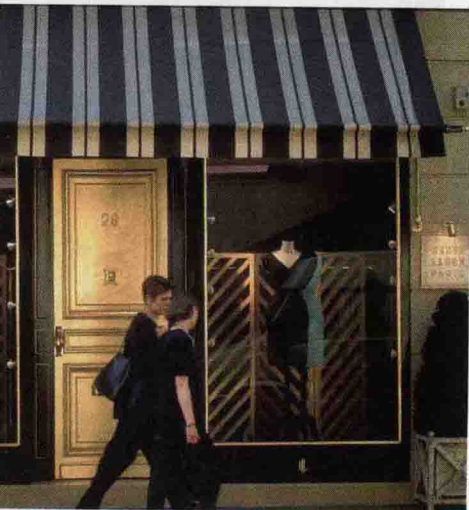
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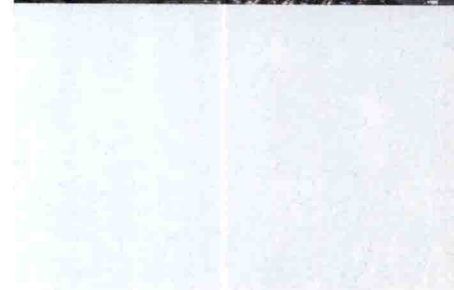
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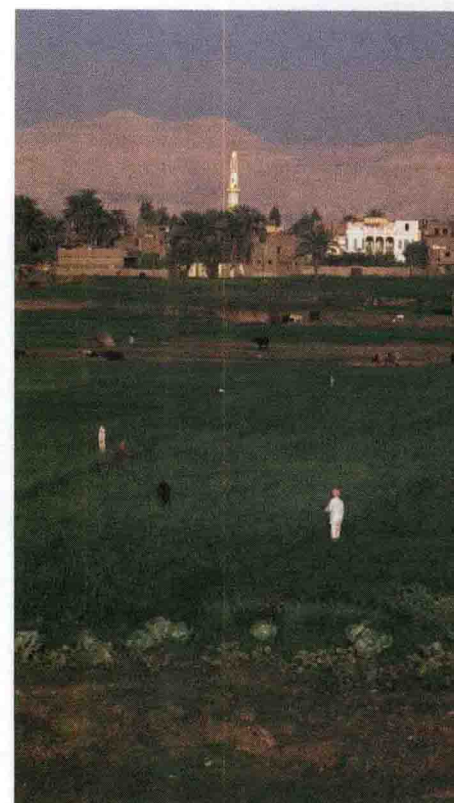
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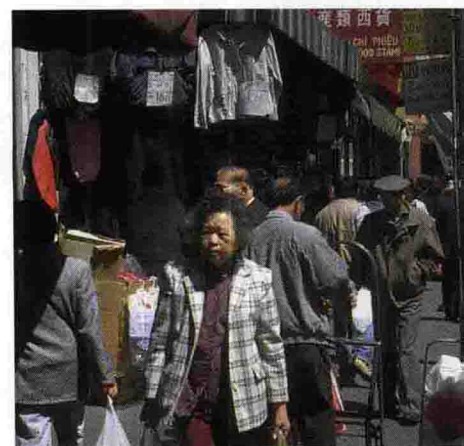
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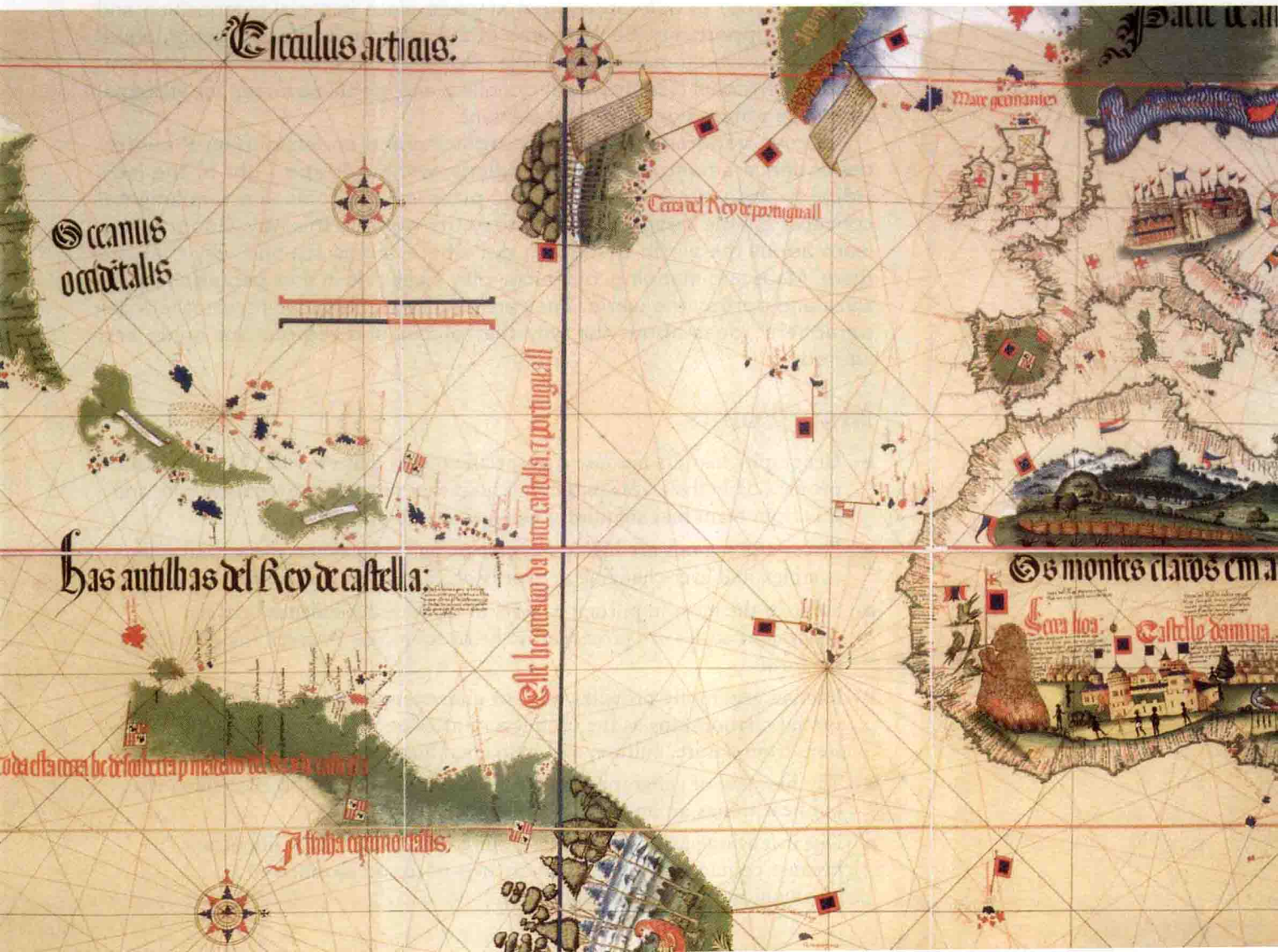
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Portugal's claims to the New World The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) gave Portugal control over what were the more accessible parts of the New World. This map, drawn in 1502 by Alberto Contino, shows Portuguese territories marked by flags with a blue interior and a red border. Spanish territories, farther west, are marked by the red, gold, and black flag of Spain.



In today's world, where places are increasingly interdependent, it is important to know something about human geography and to understand how places affect, and are affected by, one another. Consider, for example, some of the prominent news stories of 1999. At first glance they were a mixture of achievements, disputes, and disasters that might seem to have little to do with geography, apart from the international flavor of the coverage. There was a peace settlement in Ireland; civil war in Angola, Colombia, and the Sudan; ethnic strife in the Congo and Sri Lanka; the deployment of NATO troops in Kosovo; the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in East Timor; Chechen terrorist bombs in Moscow; a border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea; threats of nuclear war between India and Pakistan; and, in the United States, a booming economy driven by new technologies and the globalization of business. Off the front pages, we read of the speculation about the effects of global warming; controversies over genetically modified foods; the diffusion of the AIDS epidemic; and continuing debates over the dismantling of the welfare system.

Most of these stories did, in fact, reflect important geographical dimensions. The diffusion of AIDS, for example, is a geographical as well as a social and cultural phenomenon. Thus, in the United States as in other countries, the AIDS epidemic has diffused through the country in a very distinctive geographical pattern. The dismantling of the welfare state also involves some important spatial patterns. The withdrawal of welfare policies by federal and state governments has had a much greater impact on some communities than on others because of differences from place to place in social composition and economic opportunity. Behind some of the major news stories, geographical processes played a more central role. Stories about economic development, regional territorial disputes, ethnic conflict, and global warming, for example, all involve a strong geographical element.

Human geography is about recognizing and understanding the interdependence among places and regions, without losing sight of the individuality and uniqueness of specific places. Basic tools and fundamental concepts enable geographers to study the world in this way. Geographers learn about the world by finding out where things are and why they are there. Maps and mapping, of course, play a key role in how geographers analyze and portray the world. They are also key in introducing to others geographers' ideas about the way that places and regions are made and altered.

Main Points

- Geography matters because it is specific places that provide the settings for people's daily lives. It is in these settings that important events happen; and it is from them that significant changes spread and diffuse.
- Places and regions are highly *interdependent*, each filling specialized roles in complex and ever-changing networks of interaction and change.
- Some of the most important aspects of the interdependence between geographic scales are provided by the relationships between the *global* and the *local*.
- Human geography provides ways of understanding places, regions, and spatial relationships as the products of a series of interrelated forces that stem from nature, culture, and individual human action.
- The first law of geography is that "everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than are distant things."
- Distance is one aspect of this law, but connectivity is also important, because contact and interaction are dependent on channels of communication and transportation.

Why Places Matter

An appreciation of the diversity and variety of peoples and places is a theme that runs through the entire span of **human geography**, the study of the spatial organization of human activity and of people's relationships with their environments. This theme is inherently interesting to nearly all of us. *National Geographic* magazine (Figure 1.1) has become a national institution by drawing on the wonder and fascination of the seemingly endless variety of landscapes and communities around the world. Almost 8 million households, representing about 30 million regular readers, subscribe to this one magazine for its intriguing descriptions and striking photographs. Millions more read it occasionally in offices, lobbies, or waiting rooms.

Yet many Americans often seem content to confine their interest in geography to the pages of glossy magazines, to television documentaries, or to vacations. It has become part of the conventional wisdom that many Americans have little real appreciation or understanding of people and places beyond their daily routines. This is perhaps putting it too mildly. Surveys have revealed widespread ignorance among a high proportion of Americans, not only of the fundamentals of the world's geography but also of the diversity and variety within the United States itself. This ignorance and apathy have been lampooned by Garry Trudeau (Figure 1.2), whose *Doonesbury* cartoons so often capture our shortcomings. So, although most people are fascinated by different places, relatively few have a systematic knowledge of them. Fewer still have an understanding of how different places came to be the way they are, or why places matter in the broader scheme of things. This lack of understanding is an important issue because geographic knowledge can take us far beyond simply glimpsing the inherently interesting variety of peoples and places.

human geography: the study of the spatial organization of human activity and of people's relationships with their environments.

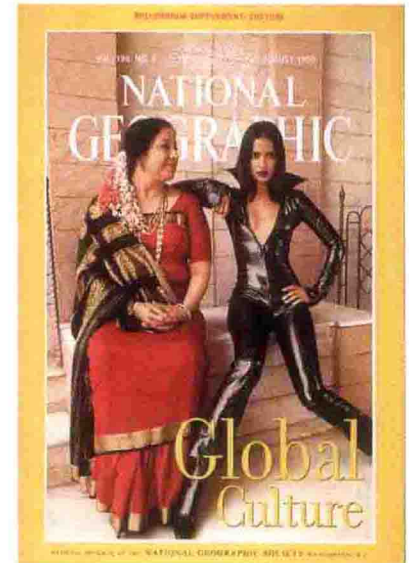


Figure 1.1 Geography's popularity
The *National Geographic* magazine has the third-largest subscription rate in the United States (after *TV Guide* and *Reader's Digest*). Its popularity reflects people's interest in the variety of landscapes and communities around the world (though more than half of its subscribers look only at the photographs and their captions). Part of its popularity is almost certainly a result of the care that the editors have taken to present the world as inoffensively as possible, with upbeat coverage and a simplified view of the world as a collection of separate places, each eventually to be visited through photojournalism. (Source: Joseph McNally/NGS Image Collection.)

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



Figure 1.2 Garry Trudeau lampoons American geographic literacy
Surveys have consistently ranked American college graduates last in geographic knowledge, compared with their counterparts in other developed countries. Typically, only about half of all American college graduates can accurately locate New York on a map of the United States, London on a map of England, or Cairo on a map of Africa. Fewer still are able to say much about London as a place, or to discuss how events in New York, London, and Cairo affect one another. (Source: *Doonesbury* © 1988 G. B. Trudeau. Reprinted with permission of Universal Press Syndicate. All rights reserved.)

The importance of geography as a subject of study is becoming more widely recognized, however, as people everywhere struggle to understand a world that is increasingly characterized by instant global communications, unfamiliar international relationships, unexpected local changes, and growing evidence of environmental degradation. Many more schools now require courses in geography than just a decade ago, and the College Board has added the subject to its Advanced Placement program. Between 1985–1986 and 1995–1996, the number of bachelor's degrees in geography increased from 3,056 to 4,145. Meanwhile, many employers are coming to realize the value of employees with expertise in geographical analysis and an understanding of the uniqueness, influence, and interdependence of places.

The Uniqueness of Places

Places are dynamic, with changing properties and fluid boundaries that are the product of the interplay of a wide variety of environmental and human factors. This dynamism and complexity are what make places so fascinating for readers of *National Geographic*. They are also what make places so important in shaping people's lives and in influencing the pace and direction of change. Places provide the settings for people's daily lives. It is in these settings that people learn who and what they are, and how they should think and behave.

A young white female growing up in an affluent suburb of a small Midwestern city, for example, learns (from her family, friends, and neighbors, and from her own experiences of her physical environment) that she is a unique individual; that she has to respect other people's ideas and especially their property; that her standing as an individual will be measured by her educational achievements, sports performance, and material possessions; that her destiny will be a function of her own efforts; and so on. A young female growing up in a different setting—let's say a neighborhood on the outskirts of an Iranian city—learns a different set of beliefs and behaviors. Her experience will center on her home and immediate neighborhood and teach her that she is an integral part of her family and community; that she has to respect other people's roles within this social environment; and that her own standing will be measured by her comportment within a relatively close circle of kin and friends.

Not only do these differences of emphasis result in rather different values, attitudes, and behaviors, they also make it difficult for people raised in different settings to understand and appreciate one another. Americans are often shocked at what they perceive as the subjugated lifestyles of Iranian women. Conversely, Iranians are often shocked at what they perceive as the amoral and materialistic lifestyles of American women.

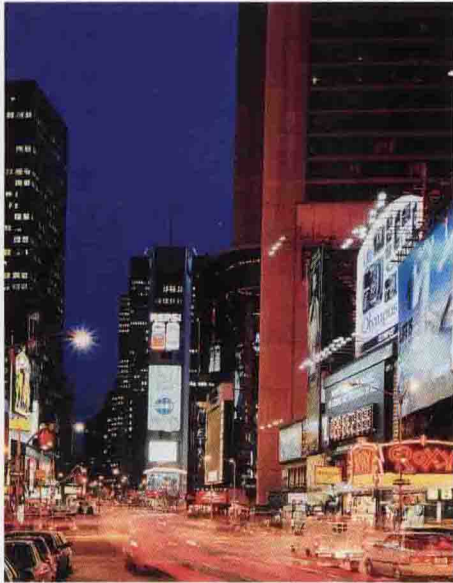
The Influence and Meaning of Places

Places also exert a strong influence, for better or worse, on people's physical well-being, their opportunities, and their lifestyle choices. Living in a small town dominated by petrochemical industries, for example, means a higher probability than elsewhere of being exposed to air and water pollution, having only a limited range of job opportunities, and having a relatively narrow range of lifestyle options because of a lack of amenities such as theaters, specialized stores and restaurants, and recreational facilities. Living in the central neighborhoods of a large metropolitan area, on the other hand, usually means having a wider range of job opportunities and a greater choice of lifestyle options because of the variety of amenities accessible within a short distance; but it also means living with a relatively high exposure to crime.

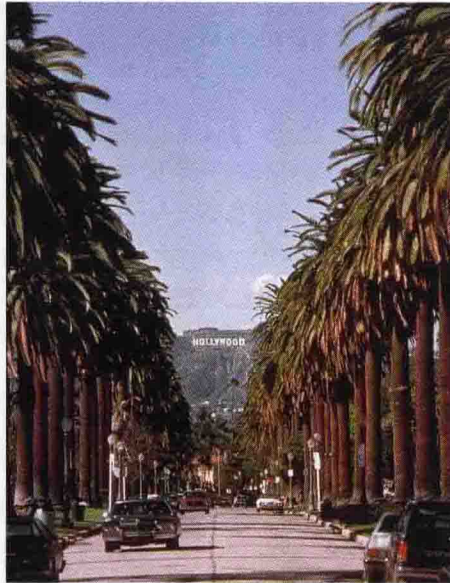
Places also contribute to people's collective memory and become powerful emotional and cultural symbols. Think of the evocative power for most Americans of places like Times Square in New York; the Mall in Washington, DC; Hollywood

Boulevard in Los Angeles; and Graceland in Memphis (Figure 1.3). And for many people, ordinary places have special meaning: a childhood neighborhood, a college campus, a baseball stadium, or a family vacation spot. This layering of meanings reflects the way that places are socially constructed—given different meanings by different groups for different purposes. Places exist, and are constructed by their inhabitants, from a subjective point of view. At the same time, though, the same places will likely be constructed rather differently by outsiders. Your own neighborhood, for example, centered on yourself and your home, is probably heavily laden with personal meaning and sentiment. But your neighborhood may well be viewed very differently, and perhaps unsympathetically, from an outsider's perspective. This distinction is useful in considering the importance of understanding spaces and places from the viewpoint of the insider—the person who normally lives in and uses a particular place—as well as from the viewpoint of outsiders (including geographers).

Figure 1.3 The power of place Some places acquire a strong symbolic value because of the buildings, events, people, or histories with which they are associated. These examples are all places with a strong symbolic value for most Americans and, indeed, for many residents of other countries. (Source for Graceland photo: Liz Gilbert/Corbis Sygma.)



Times Square, New York



Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles



Graceland, Memphis



The Mall, Washington, DC