

Regions Tell Stories

Physical settings and human choices shape American regions.

SS.8.G.2.1 "Identify the physical elements and the human elements that define and differentiate regions as relevant to American history."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline physical elements and circle human elements in the passage. Write the same number beside one physical element and one human element in each paragraph that work together to define that region.

How Regions Took Shape

- ① In the 1600s, New England developed as a region along the Atlantic coast. Thick forests supplied timber, rocky soil limited large farms, and many protected harbors opened routes to the sea. The short growing season also shaped work. English Puritan settlers built compact towns with meetinghouses and local governments. Families farmed small plots, while others fished, built ships, or traded. These human choices grew from the land and water, but religion and political traditions also helped distinguish New England from nearby colonies.
- ② Farther south, the Chesapeake region included much of colonial Virginia and Maryland. Broad rivers flowed into Chesapeake Bay, making boat travel useful. Fertile lowlands and a longer growing season supported tobacco, a crop that exhausted soil over time. Planters created large plantations and used enslaved African labor after first relying heavily on indentured servants. Scattered homes and county governments became common. Although the Chesapeake and New England were both English colonies, their physical settings, labor systems, settlement patterns, and economies made them different regions.
- ③ During the nineteenth century, the Great Plains became another changing American region. Wide grasslands, few trees, and limited rainfall made farming difficult in many places. Bison herds once supported several Indigenous nations, whose trade networks and seasonal movements reflected the environment. Later, railroads carried settlers, crops, and cattle across the plains. Homesteaders used new farming methods, while ranchers grazed cattle on open range. Federal land policies and conflicts that forced Indigenous peoples from their lands were human actions that transformed the region.

2

ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1

Name one physical element and one human element that helped define New England.

2

How did the Chesapeake region's physical setting affect transportation and farming?

3

Identify two human actions that transformed the Great Plains during the nineteenth century.

4

State one physical difference and one human difference between New England and the Chesapeake.

3

YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose two American regions not described in the passage. Complete the table with physical elements, human elements, and an explanation of how those elements helped define each region.

REGION	PHYSICAL ELEMENTS	HUMAN ELEMENTS	HOW THE ELEMENTS HELPED DEFINE THE REGION

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline physical elements and circle human elements in the passage. Write the same number beside one physical element and one human element in each paragraph that work together to define that region. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name one physical element and one human element that helped define New England.	Physical element: rocky soil, forests, protected harbors, or a short growing season. Human element: Puritan towns, meetinghouses, local governments, small farms, fishing, shipbuilding, or trade.
2	How did the Chesapeake region's physical setting affect transportation and farming?	Broad rivers made boat travel useful. Fertile lowlands and a longer growing season supported tobacco farming.
3	Identify two human actions that transformed the Great Plains during the nineteenth century.	Answers may include building railroads, homesteading with new farming methods, open-range cattle grazing, federal land policies, or conflicts that forced Indigenous peoples from their lands.
4	State one physical difference and one human difference between New England and the Chesapeake.	New England had rocky soil and a short growing season, while the Chesapeake had fertile lowlands and a longer growing season. New England had compact Puritan towns and small farms, while the Chesapeake had large plantations, enslaved labor, scattered homes, and county governments.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

REGION	PHYSICAL ELEMENTS	HUMAN ELEMENTS	HOW THE ELEMENTS HELPED DEFINE THE REGION
Pacific Northwest	Dense forests, mountains, wet climate, and rivers	Indigenous fishing communities; later lumber towns and ports	Forests and rivers supported fishing and timber work, helping create a region tied to natural resources and trade.
Great Basin	Dry basins, mountains, and scarce rainfall	Shoshone and Paiute communities; Mormon settlers built irrigated settlements	Limited water made irrigation and clustered settlements important in the region.

Accept accurate physical features, human activities, settlement patterns, labor systems, beliefs, governments, or economic choices that clearly fit each selected region. The final column should connect at least one physical element and one human element to the region's identity.