

# **GEOGRAPHY**

## **OF THE USA**

1 videocassette ..... 19 minutes

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4540 Preslyn Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27616-3177  
1-800-331-4047

**CREDITS**

Producer: Martha Ann Byrnes

Author: Greg Byrnes Narrator:

Throop Geer III Video Editor:

Jeanne Fones Graphics: Parterre

Productions

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In this program the geography of the USA is examined in terms of the similarities and diversity of its landforms, climate and regional characteristics. It begins in Washington, D. C. , our nation's capital, and then covers the six distinct geographic regions that comprise the United States.

Through the use of maps and live action footage, students quickly get an understanding of the similarity and the diversity found within our borders. They see the different places where people live and how they make their living. They get a sense of which geographic landforms and climates are experienced by people in different parts of the U.S.

Moving from east to west this regional approach introduces students to the 50 states. It looks at where the United States is, in relation to the rest of the world, and where your community is in relation to the rest of the country.

It is an exciting tour of a country which is so varied that it is almost like studying the geography of six or seven different nations. When students are finished it is hoped they will want to study more about the Geography of the U.S.A. If so, this program will have achieved its purpose in generating new enthusiasm for an important subject.

## OBJECTIVES

After this program your students should:

- \* Understand the geography of the U.S.A. in terms of the similarity and diversity of its landforms, climate and regional characteristics.
- \* Name the six basic geographic regions of the United States.
- \* Know the similarities and differences of the geography in these regions.
- \* List some of the major cities of the United States and know where they are located.
- \* Know where the U.S. is, in relation to other countries.
- \* Understand how the geography of various U.S. regions influences the people who live there.

## SUMMARY

The program opens in Washington, DC, as school children visit, observe and photograph the nation's capital. From Washington a postcard is sent westward to California as our geographic survey of the United States begins.

California was originally a Spanish and Mexican settlement and that heritage is examined. Students also learn about the rich land and mild climate as well as California's propensity for earthquakes.

A postcard is then sent to a friend in Alaska, America's largest state. It is rich in oil, minerals and wildlife and reaches right into the Arctic circle. From there a postcard is sent to a friend in Chicago, America's third largest city. Here a vital business center on Lake Michigan, food and produce from the midwest are sold to the world.

A postcard to New York brings us across the continent of North America. New York is the nation's largest city and an important international city. While examining this international perspective, students see the United States' geographic position as it relates to the rest of the world.

Located in the center of North America, the Atlantic forms the U.S.' eastern boundary, while the Pacific is its western boundary. The United States is geographically large and ethnically diverse. Alaska and Hawaii carry American territory far out into the Pacific. In fact, at one point the United States is only 50 miles from Asia.

The program examines the 50 states within the framework of six important geographic regions. These are the northeast states, made up of New England and the mid-Atlantic states; the southeast states which are divided into the Appalachian highlands and the deep south; the midwestern states of the American heartland; the Great Lakes states and the Great Plains states; and the southwestern states which form the dry region north of the Mexican border.

To the north are the mountain states of the west where the cowboy can still be seen. Then there are the Pacific coast states, which comprise the west coast and the Hawaiian Islands.

A series of color coded maps outlining the states in each region is presented along with photos of the various types of activities the people in these different places engage in. A connection is made between what people do and where they live as geography is linked to everyday life.

While the regions of the United States are diverse, and there are many important landforms, they form one nation. Its amazing diversity makes it a fascinating subject for both Americans and those in other countries.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In the name Washington DC, what does the DC stand for?

The District of Columbia.

2. Name three important government buildings in Washington. On which coast is this city?

Washington is on the east coast and here are found the Capitol, the Supreme Court, the White House, the Library of Congress and many other important government buildings.

3. What type of farming is California famous for?

Fruit and vegetable farming.

4. Name one factor that contributes to California's temperate climate?

The warm California Current.

5. What is the second largest city in the United States?

Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States.

6. What is America's largest state and what is it best known for?

Alaska is America's largest state and it is known for its rich oil, gas and minerals deposits and its abundant wildlife.

7. What is America's third largest city and what is it known for?

Chicago is America's third largest city. Located on Lake Michigan in Illinois it is a business center where the food and produce from the midwest are marketed to the world.

8. What is America's largest city and what famous international body is located there?

New York is the largest city in the United States and the home of the United Nations.

9. What countries border the United States?

The United States is bordered by Canada and Mexico.

10. Name the six New England states?

Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

11. List the five mid-Atlantic states?

New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

12. Which is the most densely populated state?

New Jersey, an important manufacturing state.

13. Name three large cities in the mid-Atlantic states?

New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

14. What two regions are the southern states divided into?

The Appalachian highlands and the deep south.

15. What five states are in the Appalachian Highlands?

Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee.

16. What seven states comprise the deep South?

Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and South Carolina

17. What is our second largest overseas port?

New Orleans, Louisiana, is our second largest overseas port.

18. What two groups of states are found in the American heartland?

The Great Lakes states and the Great Plains states.

19. Name the five Great Lakes states?

The Great Lakes states are Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

20. Name the five Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario. They contain one quarter of the world's fresh water supply.

21. What are the seven Great Plains states?

The Great Plains states are Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota.

22. Which state has the largest iron ore deposits?

Minnesota.

23. Which are the four southwest states?

The southwest states are Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

24. Which is the second largest state?

Texas.

25. What is the oldest seat of government in the United States?

Santa Fe, New Mexico.

26. In what state is the Grand Canyon found?

In Arizona.

27. What are the five Mountain States?

The Mountain States are Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Nevada and Utah.

28. In what state is the Great Salt Lake found?

The Great Salt Lake is found in Utah.

29. What are the five Pacific coast states?

The Pacific coast states are California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands.

30. Name two important natural resources found in the Pacific northwest?

In the Pacific northwest, timber and fishing are important resources.

## ACTIVITIES AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have students group the 50 states into regions, listing them along with their capitals. This will help reinforce their geographic knowledge of the 50 states.
2. Looking at a map of the United States, how would students describe the country and its location, to someone who doesn't know the geography of the U.S.? What are some of its most outstanding geographical features and where is it in relation to other nations of the world?
3. Have your class list all the different kinds of climate that are found in the United States, along with the geographic region. They should note in which seasons various temperature ranges and types of weather are found.
4. One reason our weather is so temperate is the Gulf Stream in the east and the California Current in the west. Have students do a research paper examining the impact of these phenomena. Why is Canada colder than the United States?
5. The regions of the United States are highly diverse and there are many important landforms. Have students create a list of the 5 most interesting landforms in the United States. What do they think is unique or interesting about each of their selections? Why do they think people from other countries might be interested in seeing these landforms?
6. American Indian names dot the American landscape. Are there any Indian names for

towns, cities, or regions in your state or area? Have students research the original meaning of some of these names. They should also note their current usage.

7. Every state has a story to tell. Have students list the most significant geographic landforms in your state, the primary jobs people have, the most important manufactured goods and agricultural products and the state capital. How is your state typical of your geographic region? How is it unique?

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## SCRIPT

In this program we'll look at the geography of the United States of America in terms of the similarity and diversity in its landforms, climate and regional characteristics."

We'll begin in Washington, DC, (the District of Columbia) the capital of our country.

This is where the government is located; where the president lives and the Congress makes laws. You'll also find the Supreme Court here.

In Washington, you'll find the Library of Congress and offices for all the government bureaus and departments.

If you're looking at a map of the United States, Washington will be located here.

Washington is about half-way down the eastern coast of the United States'.

If you lived in Washington, you might want to send a postcard of your home town to a friend in another part of the country so he could see what a beautiful city it is.

Let's say you sent it all the way across the country to a friend who lives in California on the west coast.

To do that, it would have to cross 3,000 miles.

California was originally a Spanish and Mexican settlement and many of the people who live there are of Hispanic descent.

California is a rich land with a mild climate where fruits and vegetables are grown.

Because of the warm California Current it has a temperate climate.

Los Angeles, the second largest city in the United States, is here. Nearby is Hollywood, the headquarters of the film and TV industry.

San Francisco to the north has the Golden Gate Bridge, one of the most magnificent bridges in the world.

California is also earthquake country.

Then our friend in California sends a postcard to another friend in Alaska, America's largest state. It is rich in oil, minerals and wildlife.

Parts of Alaska reach right into the Arctic circle, the cold region around the North Pole.

Now a postcard is sent from Alaska to a friend in a big city: Chicago. This is America's third largest city. It is in the heart of the country.

Located on Lake Michigan in Illinois, Chicago is a vital business center where the food and produce from the midwest are marketed to the world.

The midwest is an important farming region. In fact, much of the world's food is grown in this region.

If someone in Chicago sent a postcard to New York it will have crossed not only the United States, but the continent of North America.

New York is not only the largest city in the United States, it is also an international city, the home of the United Nations.

It is to New York that people from all over the world come. If someone from another country were looking for the United States, where would he find it?

Well if you look in the center of North America - between the borders of Canada and Mexico, you'll find the U.S.A.

The Atlantic Ocean forms its eastern boundary, linking it to Europe and Africa.

The Pacific is its western boundary, linking it to the island nations of the Pacific, the orient and the vast land of Russia.

To the south is the Gulf of Mexico and Mexico itself which link it to South America.

The United States is a large country - with one of the most diverse populations on earth. Most of it lives in the 48 contiguous states. These are the states in the 2,800 mile wide zone from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Alaska and Hawaii stretch American territory far out into the Pacific. In fact, the very tip of the last Aleutian Island in Alaska is not far from Asia, and the Bering Strait separates Alaska from Russia by only 50 miles at one point.

Besides 50 political units called states, there are six important geographic regions in the United States. Looking at this map can you guess where they are?

Let's look at them one at a time.

There are the northeast States, made up of New England and the mid-Atlantic States.

The New England states are: Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

The mid-Atlantic states are: New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

New England is noted for its many small cities, which developed as manufacturing centers along rivers. It has a rocky coast and interior mountains.

The traditional New England village was made famous in drawings by Norman Rockwell.

The middle Atlantic states are dominated by large cities and metropolitan areas like New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

New Jersey, in the center of the region, is a key manufacturing state and the most densely populated state in the nation.

The southeast states - which include most of the states of the old Confederacy - are divided into the Appalachian highlands and the deep south.

The Appalachian highlands are the lower regions of the Appalachian Mountains that

extend along the eastern part of our country, The following states can be found in the Appalachian highlands: Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Woodworking, mining, manufacturing, military and civilian government employment and tobacco farming are important here.

Memphis is the capital of country music, while Louisville hosts the Kentucky Derby.

The deep south includes: Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas,

Cotton and rice are found here. You'll also find oil, gas and coal. New Orleans, Louisiana is our second largest overseas port.

Atlanta, Georgia, is a business hub of the south, while Florida is home to orange crops and playlands. It's also an important business connection to South America.

The midwestern states comprise the American heartland. These include the Great Lakes states and the Great Plains states.

The Great Lakes states are: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The large inland lakes, Lake Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario were gouged out of the earth thousands of years ago by glaciers. They contain one quarter of the world's fresh water supply.

In the Great Plains states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota the land is flat and fanning is king.

Corn and wheat from the heartland feed the nation and the world. Iron ore deposits of Minnesota are the largest of any state. The Great Plains is a region rich in resources.

The southwestern states form the dry region north of the Mexican border.

The southwest states are: Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Texas is the second largest state and has the largest cities in the region. Oil, commerce, and cattle are important here.

Santa Fe, New Mexico was founded in 1610 and is the oldest seat of government in the United States. Spanish and American Indian cultural influences are important here.

In Arizona you find the Grand Canyon, a national treasure.

To the north are the mountain states of the west. Here the altitude is high and the population is low. The cowboy can still be seen here.

The mountain states are: Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Nevada and Utah.

The Great Salt Lake of Utah was once a vast inland sea. Today large salt deposits can be seen.

Silver, gold and copper deposits can be found in Montana, Colorado and Nevada. And Idaho produces potatoes for the world.

Then there are the Pacific coast states: California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands.

This is a vast region. Hawaii with its volcanoes is continuing to expand, while Alaska, rich in resources is the largest state.

In the Pacific northwest timber and fishing are important resources. California, home to Los Angeles and San Francisco is called the Golden State because of its rich resources and year-round moderate climate.

As a French visitor to the United States wrote over 100 years ago, "America is a land of wonders, in which everything is in constant motion and every change seems an improvement."

While the regions of the United States are diverse, and there are many important landforms. They form one nation, which geographically speaking, is one of the most amazing places on earth.

THE END

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