



## What's It All About?

### Springboard:

Students should read "What's the Difference?" and answer the questions.  
(1. The passage is explaining how "interesting" geography is, while the cartoon is implying the subject is boring. 2. See definitions.)

**Objective:** The student will be able to explain the studies of physical and cultural geography.

**Materials:** What's the Difference? (Springboard handouts or Student Study Log or "S.S.L." page 9)  
Ask Dr. G. Ographer (handouts)  
Geography Is... (handouts or S.S.L. page 10)

**Terms to know:**

- physical geography** – the study of the earth's landforms, weather, and plant and animal patterns
- cultural geography** – the study of people and their ways of life
- geographer** – person who studies the physical features, products, political divisions, and people of the world (or any part of the world)
- contrast** – (*n*) difference; (*v*) to explain how things are different
- culture** – way of life

### Procedure:

- Review the Springboard answers and discuss, making sure students understand the definitions of the related terms. Then explain that *in this lesson students will learn more about geography from someone who makes her living in the field.*
- Hand out copies of "Ask Dr. G. Ographer" and "Geography Is...." Depending upon students' reading levels, have them work in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class to read the letters and complete the graphic organizer. Encourage students to brainstorm topics in addition to those mentioned in the readings.
- Have students share and discuss their notes and geographic definitions. (*Answers may vary, but students should note similarities.*)



# What's the Difference?

People have been studying geography since ancient times. The Ancient Greeks actually invented and named the subject. The word "geography" comes from the Greek word "geo," or "earth," and "grapho," which means "to write."

Many people think that studying geography means learning facts like countries and capitals or taking tests about mountains and rivers. In fact geography is much more interesting! Geography is a way of looking at the world and its people and solving problems.

Geography can help answer many questions. What is causing changes in the earth's climate? How can people protect themselves from storms? When will the next major earthquake hit? Where will a disease strike next? Learning about the world is very important.

There are two main areas of geography: physical and cultural. Physical geography looks at landforms, climate, and the earth's plants and animals. Cultural geography is the study of people and their ways of doing things. Cultural geography looks at where people live, why, and how.



## What's the **DIFFERENCE** (or **CONTRAST**)?

1. **CONTRAST** the reading passage and the cartoon.

2. **CONTRAST** physical and cultural geography.



# ASK Dr. G. Oographer

*Our newspaper is lucky to have Dr. G. Oographer, a well known expert in the field of geography, as a guest writer. We welcome our readers to write in with their questions about geography, and Dr. G. answers as many letters as she can in this monthly column.*

Dear Dr. G. Oographer,

I always thought geography was the study of mountains and landforms, but this year in my geography class we are learning mostly about people around the world. I don't understand. Please help.

Mixed Up in Mississippi

*Dear Mixed Up,*

*You are right in thinking that geographers study landforms, but we also study the people that live on the land. Cultural geography is the study of people in different places and their ways of life: their languages, housing, religion, the types of foods they eat, their forms of transportation, and so forth. I myself find cultural geography even more interesting than physical geography, but I am interested in both.*

*I hope this helps clear things up for you,  
Dr. G.*

Dear Dr. G. Oographer,

I am a fourth grade student and my favorite subject in school is geography. I was wondering if there are any jobs I could do with geography besides answer letters in a newspaper. Please write back and tell me.

Thank you,  
Mark J.

*Dear Mark,*

*I have good news for you. There are many jobs you could do if you decide to study geography. Geographers, what we call experts in the field, work with many other scientists to study the earth. Some work with our leaders in Washington, D.C. to help them decide where to build roads and dams. Others work to protect people from floods, storms, diseases, and other disasters. There are really too many things that geographers do for me to explain them all now. I am just happy to hear that you like your geography class and want to learn more about the subject!*

*Best of luck in your studies,  
Dr. G*

Dear Dr. G. Ographer,

I think I understand what geography is, but I don't understand how it is different from other fields. I know geographers study land and water, but so do other scientists. I know that geographers try to learn about people and cultures, but so do other fields. Could you please explain how geography is different from other sciences?

In Need of Information in Indiana

*Dear In Need,*

*The question you ask is a good one. The answer, however, is not easy to give. I would have to say that geography often overlaps with other sciences, both physical and cultural. In fact it is common for geographers to work with other sciences on many projects. For example, geographers and geologists, who study rocks, might both be called upon for help with a mining project. In the case of a disease, geographers would work with doctors. Geography is a subject that covers a lot of ground. I know I did not answer your question fully, but I hope I have helped you understand a little more.*

*Keep asking; it's the best way to learn!*

*Dr. G.*

Dear Dr. G. Ographer,

I am a parent of children in elementary school. My son is studying geography this year and I am worried about his class. When I was in school, we had to study facts and take tests about them. I could say the names of all of the countries, mountain ranges, and rivers, but I have not seen my son learning the same kinds of things. Instead he tells me about topics like place, movement, and regions. Do you think my son has a bad geography teacher?

Signed,  
Worried

*Dear Worried,*

*It sounds like your son's teacher is very good. The topics you mentioned are three of the Five Themes of Geography. Geographers study the world in several ways: by looking at locations, places, ways humans interact with their environment, how people move and use products, and ways people and places can be looked at as groups – or regions. I'm sure if you ask your son, he will tell you more about the Five Themes of Geography.*

*Thank you for writing,  
Dr. G*

# GEOGRAPHY IS...



**DIRECTIONS:** Fill in each box of the graphic organizer with as many things as you can think of:

“Physical” when it looks at:

“Cultural” when it looks at:

Now, use what you have learned to write your own definition for “GEOGRAPHY”:

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