Discover!

5A

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SOCIAL STUDIES

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Lesson 13

The Geography of Asia

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify key physical geographic features in Asia
- describe why people may live near a physical feature found in Asia
- identify different regions of Asia on a map

Lesson Review

If you need to review the different types of maps, please go to the lesson titled "How Maps Tell a Story of Asia."

Academic Vocabulary

Read the following vocabulary words and definitions. Look through the lesson. Can you find each vocabulary word? Underline the vocabulary word in your lesson. Write the page number of where you found each word in the blanks.

- **fertile:** land that is great for growing crops (page _____)
- **nomad:** a person who moves from place to place and doesn't settle down for long periods of time (page _____)
- **river delta:** a place where a river empties into the ocean (page _____)
- **steppe:** a large area of grassland (page _____)

IN THE REAL WORLD

Have you ever traveled to a new city and noticed that the people there do things just a little differently than you do at home? Maybe they have a different accent or way of speaking. Maybe the restaurants offer different types of food than you are used to, or the people wear different types of clothes. These are some examples of culture. As you complete the lesson, select a region in Asia that is discussed. Research what cultural characteristics the people share, like religion, clothing style, food, economic system, or government type. Then, create a poster or brochure to share your findings.

Bangkok, Thailand

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EXPLORE

Many people love the bright lights and sounds of cities. It is no surprise that cities like London, Paris, Dubai, and New York are popular tourist attractions. It might seem like the major cities of the world are scattered around at random. However, if we consider where major cities are located from a geographer's point of view, patterns begin to emerge. Take a look at these pictures of three major cities in India. What do they all have in common? Write your ideas on the lines below.

People settle in different areas, including cities. What do you think people consider when they are choosing where they want to live?

Many cities in Asia and other places are built near sources of water like rivers, lakes, and oceans. What other physical features might people want to settle near? Are there any that people would want to stay away from? Write your ideas below.

Kolkata, West Bengal

Panaji, Goa

Mumbai, Maharashtra

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READ

Rivers and River Deltas

The cities you looked at in the Explore section were all located near a body of water, like a river. A river is a physical feature, and Asia has a lot of different physical features. Let's look at a map of one area of Asia. It shows the cities of China and also its physical features.

Look closely at the map. Find the cities of Shanghai, Wuhan, and Beijing and circle them.

What physical features do you notice that they are all located near? All of the cities are located near water. Beijing and Wuhan are located near rivers, while Shanghai is located next to the ocean.

Many cities are located on the banks of rivers or at the end of rivers near places called river deltas. **River deltas** are where rivers empty out into the ocean. The banks of rivers and river deltas are usually extremely **fertile** places where it is easy to grow crops. Rivers and oceans are also often filled with good fish to eat or water-loving creatures to hunt. Rivers provide humans with two of their most basic needs—water and food. They are also great for traveling on with boats. This is why so many major cities are located near them.

WRITE

Why are cities located near sources of water?

READ

Mountain Ranges

Mountains are also important physical features in Asia. Mountains are often the source of rivers because of their snowpack, which melts and becomes river water. Asia is home to several mountain ranges. The Southeast Asian countries of Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos have mountain ranges in their northern regions, with the highest peak being Phou Bia. Japan is a string of islands with mountains, with the largest being Mount Fuji. The most famous mountain range in Asia is the Himalayas. There you will find Mount Everest—the tallest mountain above sea level in the world—at over 29,000 feet (8,800 meters), as well as K2—the second-tallest mountain in the world. People settle near mountains because of the activities they provide, like skiing or hiking. There is often a lot of plant and animal life there for people who want to live in a more natural area or use the plants and animals for survival.

Steppes

Asia also has many steppes. A **steppe** is a large area of grassland. The Eastern Steppe is located to the north of China in Mongolia and stretches into parts of Russia. Grasslands might sound like a nice place to live, but life on the Eastern Steppe is hard. Winters are harsh here, and there is very little rainfall. People who live on the steppe are often nomads. **Nomads** are people who travel from place to place and do not settle down for long periods of time. The people who settle in the Eastern Steppe follow their livestock and travel with them to find new pastures, or places for them to eat, throughout the year.

This ancient city is nestled in a valley high in the Himalayas. The mountains can be a harsh place to live but offer protection and isolation for those who are willing to brave the cold winters. The people living in Nepal have become experts at living at high elevations.

Patan, ancient city in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal

WRITE

How are the mountains and steppes of Asia different?

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READ

Regions of Asia

Asia is a very diverse continent. To better understand this continent, geographers divide it into regions where people have common characteristics, like religion, language, economy, ethnic groups, or history. Here is one way geographers divide Asia into regions. As you read about each region, point to the region on the map.

CENTRAL (ORANGE)

This region touches the Caspian Sea in the east and has areas of deserts, valleys, and mountains. The Caspian Sea area was an important location for trading on the Silk Road, a trade route used by many civilizations.

SOUTHEAST (GREEN)

This region includes Indonesia, which has many islands. There are hundreds of different languages spoken there. Mountains are found in the northern part of this region, such as Phou Bia in Laos. Additionally, this region touches the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

SOUTH (PINK)

The Himalayan Mountains are a part of the region. Mount Everest is on the border of Nepal and China, while K2 is on the border of Pakistan and China. This region also touches the Indian Ocean. About one-quarter of the world's population can be found in this region.

WESTERN/MIDDLE EAST (TEAL)

This region is often called the Middle East. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are found here, which were home to one of the oldest civilizations called Mesopotamia. The Mediterranean Sea is near this region, as is the Dead Sea, which is the lowest point in Asia.

EAST (YELLOW)

This region includes Japan, which is a system of islands in the Pacific Ocean. Mount Everest, part of the Himalayan Mountains and the Eastern Steppe, is also a part of this region. The Huang He and Yangtze Rivers are found in China, which were important rivers to ancient Chinese civilizations. Additionally, the dry Gobi Desert is also found in this region.

NORTH (BLUE)

The Ural Mountains are in this region and form a border between Asia and Europe. This area has the most land in Asia but the least amount of people because it is so cold there.

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PRACTICE

Which One Is It?

Read each riddle below. Identify the physical feature or region of Asia that the riddle describes.

1. I am an area where the river meets the ocean. There are many cities in Asia that are located by places like me because of my fertile soil. I am a _____.
2. I am near the Pacific Ocean and contain some islands. One of my islands has Mount Fuji on it. I am the _____ region.
3. I have the Ural Mountains, which divide Asia from Europe. Central and East Asia are south of me. I am the _____ region.
4. I am a large area of grassland. One place I am found is in East Asia. I am a _____.
5. I am the tallest mountain above sea level in the world. I am found on the border of Nepal and China. I am _____.

Write your own riddle below to describe a physical feature or region of Asia.

.....

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Eastern Steppe, Mongolia

REVIEW

In this lesson, you learned:

- Asia has many different physical features, including mountains, rivers, oceans, and grasslands.
- People live near these physical features for many reasons, including access to food and water.
- Asia can be divided into different regions, such as Central Asia, South Asia, Western Asia/Middle East, Southeastern Asia, North Asia, and East Asia.

Think About It

What physical features would attract people to live in certain regions of Asia?

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SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

1. Which of the following are physical features of Asia? Circle all correct answers.

   A. Atlantic Ocean
   B. Eastern Steppe
   C. Himalayan Mountains
   D. Rocky Mountains
   E. Pacific Ocean
   F. River deltas
   G. Indian Ocean

2. Name a physical feature in Asia and why someone may want to live near it.

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

3. Write the letter next to the number on the map that shows each region.

   A. Western Asia
   B. South Asia
   C. Southeast Asia
   D. East Asia
   E. North Asia
   F. Central Asia

Country Study

Let's dig in and get to know the country you selected in the last lesson a little better. For this lesson, do the following activity about your country:

Try to find a map of your country that shows the different geographic features. What geographic features are present in your selected country? Write about them in your journal using specific names for the geographic features. Be sure to put a copy of the map in there too!

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