Section 1.2
The Five Themes of Geography

Key Terms, Concepts, People, and Places detailed in section 1.2

- Geography
- Geographer
- Location
  - Absolute
  - Relative
- Place
- Human-Environment Interaction
- Movement
- Regions
- Hemisphere
- Lines of Latitude
- Lines of Longitude
- Equator
- Prime Meridian
- Degree
- Grid or Grid System
- Map Projection
- Globe
- Distortion (map)
- Scale
- Map Key
- Compass Rose
- Cardinal Direction
- Types of Maps
  - General Purpose Maps
  - Political Maps
  - Physical Maps
  - Special Purpose Maps
- Climate
- Civilization
- Vegetation
- Continents
- Characteristic
- Environment

Key Questions answered in section 1.2

1. What are the 5 themes of geography?
2. Why is geographic information organized into 5 themes?
3. What question is answered in the Location theme?
4. What is the difference between absolute and relative location?
5. What question is answered in the Place theme?
6. What is the meaning of characteristic in this section?
7. What are some examples of Elberton’s characteristics?
8. What question is answered in the Human-Environment interaction theme?
9. How does a person’s environment help to determine the type of job he or she will have?
10. What question does the Movement theme answer?
11. What question does the Regions theme answer?
Section 1.2
Five Themes of Geography (continued)

A. The 5 Themes of Geography: Location, Place, Human-Environment Interaction, Movement, and Regions

- Geographers organize information into categories known as The Five Themes of Geography. They do this to make their study of the earth and everything on it easier to understand and organize. The 5 themes of geography are:

  - Location
  - Place
  - Human-Environment Interaction
  - Movement
  - Regions
Section 1.2
Five Themes of Geography (continued)

1. Location:
"Where is it?"

One of the five themes of geography is location. The Location Theme answers the question, "where is it?"

There are two ways to look at location:

Absolute Location - Absolute location tells us exactly where something is on the earth. Absolute location is like a place’s “address” and, like your own street address, it is often measured in numbers.

Relative Location - Relative location tells us where something is by pointing out what that place is near, or next to, or across from. Relative location is often measured in words like, “Elberton is near Athens.”

Examples of the Location Theme:
♦ If you were looking for a friend’s street address, you would be dealing with the (absolute) Location Theme
♦ If you were asking someone how to get to Commerce, Georgia and they said that “it is near Athens.” You would be dealing with the (relative) Location Theme

• The location theme makes use of several different types of imaginary lines such as Latitude & Longitude, the Equator, and the Prime Meridian (There are also other imaginary lines used by geographers, as you will see later in these class notes).

• Lines of Latitude are also called Parallels, because they run parallel to one another. They never meet. The circles that lines of latitude create divide the globe into units of measurement called degrees. In the middle of the globe there is a line of latitude (or parallel) called the Equator. The equator is located at 0 degrees latitude. The equator divides the earth exactly in half. Geographers measure locations and say that they are either north or south of the equator. The farthest latitude north of the Equator (90 degrees north latitude) is the North Pole, while the farthest south latitude (90 degrees south) is the South Pole.
Geographers also must pinpoint an area from east to west. For this they use another set of imaginary lines called **Lines of longitude**. Lines of longitude run north to south and are also called **Meridians**. All lines of longitude run through the North and South Poles. In the middle of the globe there is a line of longitude called the **Prime Meridian**. The Prime Meridian is at 0 degrees longitude. Geographers describe locations as east or west of the Prime Meridian. The maximum longitude is 180 degrees, which is halfway around the globe from the Prime Meridian.

The Five Themes of Geography

**LOCATION**

*Every place on earth has a location. Location is defined in terms of absolute and relative location*

- **Absolute Location**: The exact spot on earth where something is found.
  
  **Example**: Atlanta, the capital of Georgia, is located at
  
  33° 39’ N (Latitude) 84° 26’ W (longitude)

- **Relative Location**: The position of a place in relation to other places
  
  **Example**: Atlanta, the capital of Georgia is located south of Athens, Georgia and east of Tennessee.
Section 1.2
Five Themes of Geography (continued)

2. Place:
"What is it like there?"

- Another of geography’s five themes is Place. The Place Theme answers the question, "what is it like there?"

- The theme of place tells us about the different characteristics an area has, and how those characteristics make the area special. The place theme makes it possible for geographers to show us how one area is different than another.

- Each area on earth or in space has characteristics. Examples of an area’s characteristics might be a tall mountain range, rivers, a cold climate, a large human population, or the different languages spoken by its people.

Example of the Place Theme:
♦ If you were asking someone what it was like in Newark, N.J., and they told you that "New Jersey has many trees and a giant river running through its center”, you would be dealing with the Place Theme.

The Five Themes of Geography

PLACE

Every place on earth has special characteristics that make it different than every other place.

- Every place on earth can be described in terms of its physical characteristics, including weather, land features, plants, and animals
- Every place on earth can be described in terms of its human features. These features include a place's people, their cultures, and their ideas

Example: Vermont during the winter months is cold and wet. Much of the forests in this region have been stripped of their trees in part because of the people’s need for firewood during the coldest months of the year.

Example: Vermont has many hotels and motels because of the tourism during the winter months that has been brought on by the skiing industry.
3. Human-Environment Interaction:

“How do people and their environment shape one another?”

- The Human-Environment Interaction theme answers the question, “how do people and their environment shape one another?”

- A person’s environment helps to shape the way they live their lives. People also shape their environment by making it more suitable to their needs or by using its resources.

- The relationship between people and their environment and the ways they affect one another can be both positive and negative. For example, a person’s environment might have a very cold climate which makes growing food difficult and forces him or her to find it elsewhere. On the other hand, a person’s environment might be rich in natural resources, making it easier for him or her to satisfy some of their needs. In either case, the environment has had a significant influence on the way a person is able to live their life. People can also change their environment in both good and bad ways. An example of a person having a positive effect on their environment might be if he or she spent time removing dead limbs in an area prone to forest fires. On the opposite side, a person might negatively change their environment through the over-use of certain nonrenewable resources like coal or oil which would cause pollution as well as deplete earth’s supply of things that cannot be regained.

Example of the Human-Environment Interaction Theme:

♦ If you wanted to know about Australia and found out that they were dealing with a large amount of water pollution that was caused by factories dumping their sewage into the bodies of water, you would see one example of how people can shape their environment. In this case you would be dealing with the Human-Environment Interaction Theme.

The Five Themes of Geography

**HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION**

*People are constantly interacting with their surroundings. This geographic theme is called human-environment interaction.*

- People adapt to their environment.

  **Example**: People living in Georgia often wear light clothing during the summer months in an attempt to keep cool.

- People change their environment

  **Example**: People living in Georgia often add swimming pools to their land because the summer months are generally quite hot.
Section 1.2
Five Themes of Geography (continued)

4. Movement:
“How did it get there?” and “Why is it there?”

- The Movement Theme helps geographers understand the relationship among places. Movement helps explain how people, goods, and ideas get from one area to another. This theme helps to answer the questions, “How did it get there?” and “Why is it there?”

Example of the Movement Theme:
♦ If you were conducting a study on what types of food Americans eat, and discovered that certain types of food came from other nations, you would be dealing with the Movement Theme.

The Five Themes of Geography

**MOVEMENT**

*People, goods, and ideas move continuously. This theme is known as movement.*

- People meet their needs either by traveling to other places or by trading with people in other places.
- As the amount of movement and kinds of transportation change, so do other geographic features.

**Example:** People in Elberton, Georgia often travel to Athens or Atlanta to do their shopping.
- Example: The increasing number of people who want to do their shopping in Atlanta has caused the need for a shuttle bus between Athens and Atlanta.
Section 1.2
Five Themes of Geography (continued)

5. Region:
"What makes this area unique, but different from another area?"

- The Region theme is used to describe the characteristics one area has that makes it:
  1) Similar to another area
  2) Different from other areas

- This theme helps geographers answer the question, "What makes this area unique, but different from another area?"

Example of the Regions Theme:
♦ If you were studying about the different accents found in America and found that accents in the Southeastern states were similar to each other, but different than in the rest of the nation, you would be dealing with the Regions Theme.

The Five Themes of Geography
REGION
A region is an area defined by common characteristics.

» Regions can be defined by more than one characteristic

Example: Georgia can be defined as a southeastern state because of its place in the United States. It can also be defined a coastal state because of it borders the Atlantic Ocean.