

North America Location, Area, Political and Physical Features

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- North America has been named after Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian explorer. However, Christopher Columbus is credited with the discovery of this continent.
- The continent lies in the northern and the western hemispheres surrounded by the Arctic, the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. The Isthmus of Panama joins North America to South America.
- The United States of America and Canada occupy three fourths of North America.
- North America can be divided into four major physical divisions— the Canadian or Laurentian Shield, the Western Mountain System or Western Cordilleras, the Eastern Highlands or Appalachian Mountains and the Central Lowlands or Great Central Plains.
- The Canadian Shield is composed of some of the oldest known hard rocks of the world. The surface of the Shield consists of many deep depressions formed by scraping and scouring out by moving ice. These depressions have been filled up with meltwater to form many freshwater lakes such as the five Great Lakes.
- The Western Cordilleras are a series of young fold mountain ranges which have many active and extinct volcanoes, earthquake-prone regions and hot springs. The Cordilleras consist of several parallel ranges such as the Alaska Range and the Brooks Range. The highest point in North America, Mt McKinley, lies here. .
- The Appalachians are lower than the Western Cordilleras. The eastern slopes of these highlands are very steep.
- The edge of the Piedmont Plateau (located at the foot of the Appalachians or the Eastern Highlands) has many waterfalls along its length. It is referred to as the Fall Line.
- The Great Central Plains have the largest river system in North America—the Mississippi-Missouri river system.
- North America has several large rivers such as the Mississippi, Missouri, Mackenzie, Nelson, St Lawrence, Hudson, Yukon, Columbia and Rio Grande.
- Lumbering is an important activity in the coniferous or taiga forests of Canada, carried out by lumbermen or lumberjacks.
- Lumbering involves several stages of work such as cutting, skidding and hauling.

IMPORTANT TERMS

Gorge : A deep narrow valley with near vertical sides. Intermontane plateau: a plateau surrounded by mountains on all sides.

Lumbering : The cutting down of trees and the processes leading to the manufacture of products like paper, newsprint, synthetic fibres, etc.

Lumberjacks : Workers engaged in lumbering.

Meltwater : Water derived from the melting of glacier ice and/or snow.

VALUES AND LIFE SKILLS

All occupations are important. Every job has dignity and deserves our respect.
How do you treat the people who work in your home and help you in your daily life?

Answer:

We treat them with respect and dignity.

EXERCISES

A. Fill in the blanks

1. A narrow stretch of land that joins North America to South America and separates the Atlantic Ocean from the Pacific Ocean : **The Isthmus of Panama.**
2. The tropical islands, called the West Indies, are located in this sea : **Caribbean Sea.**
3. A physical division of North America around the Hudson Bay which has the oldest known hard rocks of the world : **The Canadian Shield.**
4. A river that flows northwards and drains into the Hudson Bay : **River Meckenzie and River Nelson.**

B. Identify who I am.

1. I am a city in North America which is a symbol of unity, history, and democracy : **Washington DC.**
2. I am an island at the entrance of river Hudson where the famous Statue of Liberty is situated : **Liberty Island.**
3. I am the city which is world famous for its film industry : **Los Angeles.**
4. I am the city which has the Rideau Canal : **Ottawa**
5. I am the city of Canada which was once the world's leading grain port : **Montreal**

C. Give geographical reasons why

Question 1.

The 49° N latitude and the 100°W longitude are important for North America.

Answer:

The 49° N latitude marks the boundary between Canada and United States whereas 100°W longitude passes through the centre of North America. So both are important.

Question 2.

The Western Cordilleras form part of the 'Pacific Ring of Fire'.

Answer:

The Western Cordilleras i.e. the western part of North America from Alaska to the Isthmus of Panama consists of young fold mountain ranges which contain very active volcanoes and lie close to the Pacific Ocean thus forming a part of the 'Pacific Ring of Fire'.

Question 3.

The Appalachians appear as low hills today.

Answer:

The Appalachians are old fold mountains and the glaciers and rivers have eroded them over millions of years. So they appear as low hills today.

Question 4.

Lumbering is traditionally done in the winter season.

Answer:

In winters the sap in trees is frozen, making it easier to cut and drag the logs on frozen river grounds. The winter air is clean, refreshing and free from pests.

D. Answer the following questions in brief**Question 1.**

Name the Italian explorer who reached North America in 1507 CE.

Answer:

Amerigo Vespucci.

Question 2.

Name some of the islands that are collectively called the West Indies.

Answer:

The tropical islands of the Caribbean sea are collectively called the West Indies. They include Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, etc. form West Indies.

Question 3.

Why is New York an important city in the USA?

Answer:

Hudson River is the famous Statue of Liberty on Liberty Island.

Question 4.

Where are the Great Lakes situated? Which river drains these lakes into the Atlantic Ocean?

Answer:

The Great Rivers are located in the Canadian or Laurentian shield. The St. Lawrence River connects and drains the Great Lakes.

Question 5.

Write about the largest river system of North America.

Answer:

The largest river system of America includes River Mackenzie falling into the Arctic Ocean. St. Lawrence, Hudson connecting all the Great Lakes draining into the North Atlantic Ocean, Yukon, Columbia falling into Pacific Ocean and Mississippi and Missouri rivers falling into Gulf of Mexico.

Question 6.

Where is the Grand Canyon situated? Why is it so famous?

Answer:

The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River is 2000 m deep and 400 km long and so it is famous for its majesty and beauty.

D. Answer the following questions in one or two paragraphs**Question 1.**

List the four major physical divisions of North America. Describe any one of them briefly.

Answer:

The four major physical divisions of North America are the Canadian or Laurentian shield, the Western Mountain System or Western Cordilleras, the eastern highlands or Appalachians Mountains and the central lowlands or Great Central Plains. The Central lowlands extend from Hindsom Bay in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the South covering distance of more than 6000 km and about 2000 km in width. They are also called the Great Central Plains. The plains are higher in West and slope northward in Canada. The main rivers which flow in these plains include Mackenzie, Mississippi—Missouri.

Question 2.

Why is the Canadian Shield region full of lakes? Name any three lakes other than the five Great Lakes.

Answer:

The Canadian Shield is composed of oldest known hard rocks and the surface of land consists of many deep hollows of depression. When Ice Age ended, these depressions were filled by meltwater from glaciers and ice-sheets. Apart from the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca are important lakes present in this region.

Question 3.

What are the various categories of lumberjacks? What kind of work do they do?

Answer:

The various categories of Lumberjacks include the high riggers, sawers or buckers. Skidders and haulers or transporters. The high riggers are people who climb the tall coniferous trees to cut off its branches first and then trunk.

The sawers use saw and axes to cut the trunk into lengths measuring 1 to 5 m.

The skidders mainly collect the logs and stack them along a frozen river bank, road or railway line.

The haulers ensure the transfer of logs down a river till they reach, a sawmill or factory. This include clearing 'log-jams' with long poles or use sticks of dynamites to move logs which cause jams.

Question 4.

Describe how the lives and work of lumberjacks have changed in modern times.

Answer:

Lumberjacks used to have a very hard life in earlier days as their work of falling trees begins early followed by cutting off branches of fallen trees, skidding and hauling. They had to live in camps and start their days quiet early. But now settled communities of forest workers have developed. The forests are more accessible and they use power driven saws, powered cranes and automobiles.

E. Read books and encyclopaedias to find more information about Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci and other great explorers. Record your findings and stick some pictures alongside, if possible. Then share this information with other classmates and have a classroom discussion.

Answer:

Do it yourself.

F. Picture study

This is a photograph of the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

Question 1.

Why do you think this canyon is called 'Grand'?

Answer:

This Canyon is about 2000 m deep and 400 km long because it is world famous for its majesty and beauty, so it is called the Grand Canyon.

Question 2.

Name the river that has carved out the Grand Canyon.

Answer:

Its carved out of Colorado River.