

# The American Nation

## *Chapter 1 / Section 2*

### *Lands and Climates of the United States*

#### **I. Physical Regions of the United States**

North American is the world's **third** largest continent. It is surrounded on three sides by oceans; the Atlantic ocean to the **east**, the Arctic Ocean to the **north**, and the Pacific Ocean to the **west**.

The United States is one of the **largest** countries in the world.

Geographers divide the United States into **nine different physical regions**. Pacific Coast, Intermountain Region, Rocky Mountains, Interior Plains, Ozark Highlands, Appalachian Mountains, Canadian Shield, Coastal Plains, and the Hawaiian Islands.

#### **II. American Rivers and Lakes**

Great rivers crisscross North America, linking many of the different physical regions.

##### *A. The Mississippi – Missouri River System*

The Mississippi and Missouri Rivers make up the **longest and most important river system** in the United States. In addition to the two main branches, the Mississippi-Missouri River system includes many tributaries including the Ohio, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Platte rivers.

### *B. Other Rivers*

The United States includes dozens of other rivers, both large and small. Rivers form political boundaries between the United States and its neighbors. To the south, the **Rio Grande** forms part of the border between Texas and Mexico. To the north, the **St. Lawrence River** separates the Northeast from Canada.

### *C. The Great Lakes*

**These five lakes** – Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario – form the largest body of fresh water in the world.

## **III. Climate and Weather**

The condition of the earth's atmosphere at a given time and place is its **weather**. The average weather of a place over a period of 20 to 30 years is known as **climate**. Two main features that help define an area's climate are **temperature and precipitation**. **Altitude**, or height of the land above sea level, also affects climate.

## **IV. Climates of the United States**

The United States has **10 major climates**. Today, as in the past, these climates strongly influence the nation's population patterns and economic activities. These climates are Marine, Mediterranean, Highland, Desert and Steppe, Humid Continental, Tropical and Humid Subtropical, and Tundra and Subarctic.