Text 1
ALL ABOUT THE SAHARA DESERT

The Sahara Desert is located in the northern portion of Africa and covers over 3,500,000 square miles (9,000,000 sq km) or roughly 10% of the continent. It is bounded in the east by the Red Sea and it stretches west to the Atlantic Ocean. To the north, the Sahara Desert's northern boundary is the Mediterranean Sea, while in the south it ends at the Sahel, an area where the desert landscape transforms into a semi-arid tropical savanna.

Since the Sahara Desert makes up nearly 10% of the African continent, the Sahara is often cited as the world's largest desert. This is not entirely true, however, as it is only the world's largest hot desert. Based on the definition of a desert as an area receiving less than 10 inches (250 mm) of precipitation per year, the world's largest desert is actually the continent of Antarctica.

Geography of the Sahara Desert

The Sahara covers parts of several African nations including Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan, and Tunisia. Most of the Sahara Desert is undeveloped and features a varied topography. Most of its landscape has been shaped over time by wind and includes sand dunes, sand seas called ergs, barren stone plateaus, gravel plains, dry valleys, and salt flats. Around 25% of the desert is sand dunes, some of which reach over 500 ft (152 m) in height.

There are also several mountain ranges within the Sahara Desert and many are volcanic. The highest peak found in these mountains is Emi Koussi, a shield volcano that rises to 11,204 ft (3,415 m). It is a part of the Tibesti Range in northern Chad. The lowest point in the Sahara Desert is in Egypt's Qattara Depression at -436 ft (-133 m) below sea level.

Most of the water found in the Sahara Desert today is in the form of seasonal or intermittent streams. The only permanent river in the desert is the Nile River that flows from Central Africa to the Mediterranean Sea. Other water in the Sahara Desert is found in underground aquifers and in areas where this water reaches the surface, there are oases and sometimes small towns or settlements like the Bahariya Oasis in Egypt and Ghardaïa in Algeria.

Since the amount of water and topography varies based on location, the Sahara Desert is divided into different geographic zones. The center of the Sahara Desert is considered hyper-arid and has little to no vegetation, while the northern and southern portions have sparse grasslands, desert shrubs, and sometimes trees in areas with more moisture.

Climate of the Sahara Desert

Although hot and extremely dry today, it is believed that the Sahara Desert has undergone various climatic shifts for the last few hundred thousand years. For example, during the last glaciation, it was bigger than it is today because precipitation in the area was low. But from 8000 BCE to 6000 BCE, precipitation in the Sahara Desert increased because of the development of low pressure over ice sheets to its north. Once these ice

sheets melted, however, the low pressure shifted and the northern Sahara dried out but the south continued to receive moisture due to the presence of a monsoon.
Around 3400 BCE, the monsoon moved south to where it is today and the Sahara Desert again dried out to the state it is in today. In addition, the presence of the Intertropical Convergence Zone, ITCZ, in the southern Sahara Desert prevents moisture from reaching the area, while storms north of the desert stop before reaching it as well. As a result, the annual rainfall in the Sahara is below 2.5 cm (25 mm) per year.
In addition to being extremely dry, the Sahara Desert is also one of the hottest regions in the world. The average annual temperature for the desert is 86°F (30°C) but during the hottest months temperatures can exceed 122°F (50°C), with the highest temperature ever recorded at 136°F (58°C) in Aziziyah, Libya.

Plants and Animals of the Sahara Desert

Due to the high temperatures and arid conditions of the Sahara Desert, the plant life in the Sahara Desert is sparse and includes only around 500 species. These consist mainly of drought and heat resistant varieties and those adapted to salty conditions (halophytes) where there is sufficient moisture.
The harsh conditions found in the Sahara Desert have also played a role in the presence of animal life in the Sahara Desert. In the central and driest part of the desert, there are around 70 different animal species, 20 of which are large mammals like the spotted hyena. Other mammals include the gerbil, sand fox, and Cape hare. Reptiles like the sand viper and the monitor lizard are present in the Sahara Desert as well.

People of the Sahara Desert

It is believed that people have inhabited the Sahara Desert since 6000 BCE and earlier. Since then, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Europeans have been among the peoples in the area. Today the Sahara's population is around 4 million with the majority of the people living in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, and Western Sahara.
Most of the people living in the Sahara Desert today do not live in cities; instead, they are nomads who move from region to region throughout the desert. Because of this, there are many different nationalities and languages in the region but Arabic is most widely spoken. For those who do live in cities or villages on fertile oases, crops and the mining of minerals like iron ore (in Algeria and Mauritania) and copper (in Mauritania) are important industries that have allowed population centers to grow.

Text 2
GEOGRAPHY OF THE GANGES RIVER

The Ganges River, also called Ganga, is a river located in northern India that flows toward the border with Bangladesh. It is the longest river in India and flows for around 1,569 miles (2,525 km) from the Himalayan Mountains to the Bay of Bengal. The river has the second greatest water discharge in the world, and its basin is the most heavily populated in the world with over 400 million people living in it.

The Ganges River is extremely important to the people of India as most of the people living on its banks use it for daily needs such as bathing and fishing. It is also significant to Hindus, as they consider it their most sacred river.

The Course of the Ganges River

The headwaters of the Ganges River begin high in the Himalayan Mountains where the Bhagirathi River flows out of the Gangotri Glacier in India's Uttarakhand state. The glacier sits at an elevation of 12,769 feet (3,892 m). The Ganges River proper begins farther downstream where the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers join. As the Ganges flows out of the Himalayas, it creates a narrow, rugged canyon.

North Indian River Plain

The Ganges River emerges from the Himalayas at the town of Rishikesh where it begins to flow onto the Indo-Gangetic Plain. This area, also called the North Indian River Plain, is a very large, relatively flat, fertile plain that makes up most of the northern and eastern parts of India as well as parts of Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. In addition to entering the Indo-Gangetic Plain in this area, part of the Ganges River is also diverted toward the Ganges Canal for irrigation in the Uttar Pradesh state.

Changes Direction

As the Ganges River then flows farther downstream, it changes its direction several times and is joined by many other tributary rivers such as the Ramganga, Tamsa, and Gandaki Rivers, to name a few. There are also several cities and towns that the Ganges River passes through on its way downstream. Some of these include Chunar, Kolkata, Mirzapur, and Varanasi. Many Hindus visit the Ganges River in Varanasi as that city is considered the holiest of cities. As such, the city's culture is also closely tied into the river as it is the most sacred river in Hinduism.

Flows Into Bay of Bengal

Once the Ganges River flows out of India and into Bangladesh, its main branch is known as the Padma River. The Padma River is joined downstream by large rivers like the Jamuna and Meghna rivers. After joining the Meghna, it takes on that name before flowing into the Bay of Bengal. Before entering the Bay of Bengal however, the river creates the world's largest delta, Ganges Delta. This region is a highly fertile sediment-laden area that covers 23,000 square miles (59,000 sq km).

Complex Hydrology

It should be noted that the course of the Ganges River described in the above paragraphs is a general description of the river's route from its source where the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers join to its outlet at the Bay of Bengal. The Ganges has

very complicated hydrology, and there are several different descriptions of its overall length and the size of its drainage basin based on what tributary rivers are included. The most widely accepted length of the Ganges River is 1,569 miles (2,525 km), and its drainage basin is estimated to be about 416,990 square miles (1,080,000 sq km).

The Population of the Ganges River

The Ganges River basin has been inhabited by humans since ancient times. The first people in the region were of the Harappan civilization. They moved into the Ganges River basin from the Indus River basin around the 2nd millennium BCE. Later, the Gangetic Plain became the center of the Maurya Empire and then the Mughal Empire. The first European to discuss the Ganges River was Megasthenes in his work *Indica*.

Source of Life

In modern times, the Ganges River has become a source of life for the nearly 400 million people living in its basin. They rely on the river for their daily needs such as drinking water supplies and food and for irrigation and manufacturing. Today, the Ganges River basin is the most populated river basin in the world. It has a population density of about 1,000 people per square mile (390 per sq km).

The Significance of the Ganges River

Aside from providing drinking water and irrigating fields, the Ganges River is extremely important to India's Hindu population for religious reasons as well. The Ganges River is considered their most sacred river, and it is worshiped as the goddess Ganga Ma or "Mother Ganges."

According to the Myth of the Ganges, the goddess Ganga descended from heaven to dwell in the waters of the Ganges River to protect, purify and bring to heaven those who touch it. Devout Hindus visit the river daily to offer flowers and food to Ganga. They also drink the water and bathe in the river to cleanse and purify their sins.

of people travel to the river to bathe so that they can be purified of their sins.

Pollution of the Ganges River

Despite the religious significance and daily importance of the Ganges River for the people of India, it is one of the most polluted rivers in the world. Pollution of the Ganges is caused by both human and industrial waste due to India's rapid growth as well as religious events. India currently has a population of over 1 billion people, and 400 million of them live in the Ganges River basin. As a result, much of their waste, including raw sewage, is dumped into the river. Also, many people bathe and use the river to clean their laundry. Fecal coliform bacteria levels near Varanasi are at least 3,000 times higher than what is established by the World Health Organization as safe.

Text 3
HISTORY OF THE SUPERCONTINENT PANGEA

Pangea (alternative spelling: Pangaea) was a supercontinent that existed on the Earth millions of years ago, covering about one-third of its surface. A supercontinent is a large landmass comprised of multiple continents. In the case of Pangea, nearly all of the Earth's continents were connected into a single landform. Most people believe that Pangea began developing over 300 million years ago, was fully formed 270 million years ago, and separated around 200 million years ago.

The name Pangea comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "all lands." This term was first used in the early 20th century when Alfred Wegener noticed that the Earth's continents seemed to fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. He later developed the theory of continental drift to explain the shapes and positions of continents and coined the title Pangea at a symposium in 1927 on the topic. This theory evolved over time into the modern study of plate tectonics.

Formation of Pangea

Pangea was formed through years and years of landmass formation and movement. Mantle convection within the Earth's surface millions of years ago caused new material to constantly come to the surface between the Earth's tectonic plates at rift zones. These masses or continents then moved away from the rift as new material surfaced. Continents eventually migrated toward one another to combine into one supercontinent and it was in this way that Pangea was born.

But how exactly did these landmasses join? The answer is through a lot of migration and collision. Around 300 million years ago, the northwestern part of the ancient continent of Gondwana (near the South Pole) collided with the southern part of the Euramerican continent to form one massive continent. After a while, the Angaran continent (near the North Pole) began to move south and merged with the northern part of the growing Euramerican continent, forming the supercontinent that came to be known as Pangea. This process concluded about 270 million years ago.

There was only one landmass separate from Pangea remaining, Cathaysia, and it was made up of north and south China. It never became part of the supercontinent. Once completely formed, Pangea covered around one-third of the Earth's surface and the rest was ocean (and Cathaysia). This ocean was collectively called Panthalassa.

Division of Pangea

Pangea began to break up about 200 million years ago in the same way that it was formed: through tectonic plate movement caused by mantle convection. Just as Pangea was formed through the movement of new material away from rift zones, new material also caused the supercontinent to separate. Scientists believe that the rift that would ultimately divide Pangea began due to a point of weakness in the Earth's crust. At that weak area, magma surfaced and created a volcanic rift zone. Eventually, this rift zone grew so large that it formed a basin and Pangea started to dissociate.

Ocean Formation

Distinct oceans were formed as Panthalassa occupied newly-opened areas of the landmass. The first ocean to form was the Atlantic. About 180 million years ago, a portion of the Atlantic Ocean opened up between North America and northwestern Africa. Around 140 million years ago, the South Atlantic Ocean formed when today's South America separated from the west coast of southern Africa.

The Indian Ocean emerged when India separated from Antarctica and Australia. About 80 million years ago, North America and Europe, Australia and Antarctica, and India and Madagascar followed suit and separated. Over millions more years, the continents moved to their approximate current positions.

For a diagram of Pangea and its path of separation, visit the United States' Geological Survey's Historical Perspective page within This Dynamic Earth.

Evidence for Pangea

Not everyone is convinced that Pangea ever existed, but there is plenty of evidence that experts use to prove that it did. The strongest support has to do with how the continents fit together. Other evidence for Pangea includes fossil distribution, distinctive patterns in rock strata spread out all around the world, and the global placement of coal.

Continents Fitting Together

As Alfred Wegener—creator of the continental drift theory—noticed in the early 20th century, the Earth's continents seemed to fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. This is the most significant evidence for Pangea's existence. The most prominent place where this is visible is along the northwestern coast of Africa and the eastern coast of South America. In these locations, the two continents look like they could have been connected at one point, and many believe that they were in the time of Pangea.

Fossil Distribution

Archaeologists have found matching fossil remains of ancient terrestrial and freshwater species in continents now separated by thousands of miles of ocean. For example, matching freshwater reptile fossils have been found in Africa and South America. Because crossing the Atlantic Ocean would have been impossible for these saltwater-averse creatures, their fossils indicate that the two continents must have once been connected.

Rock Patterns

Patterns in rock strata are another indicator of the existence of Pangea. Geologists have discovered distinctive patterns in rocks on continents nowhere near each other. Coastal configurations were the first marker to point to a jigsaw puzzle-like continent layout years ago, then geologists were further convinced of Pangea's existence when they discovered that even rock layers on the continents that appear to have once fit together match each other exactly. This indicates that continents must have grown apart as identical rock stratification couldn't have been a coincidence.

Text 4
HURRICANES AND TROPICAL STORMS

Hurricanes are gigantic tropical storms that can be hundreds of kilometres wide. They bring along very strong winds and a lot of rainfall. They often cause flooding near the coasts and sea levels rise.

Hurricanes occur in many parts of the world. In the Pacific Ocean they are called typhoons and in Australia they are willy-willies. In the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea they are called hurricanes.

How Hurricanes start

Hurricanes are born over tropical oceans, usually during late summer and early autumn. They need two things to get them started: heat and moist air.

During the summer the ocean surface heats up and warm moist air starts to rise. Cool air sinks down to replace it. This creates an area of low pressure.

The rotation of the earth creates winds around the centre of such a low pressure area. In the northern hemisphere the air moves counterclockwise, in the southern part clockwise. Such a system is called a cyclone.

When warm air rises it cools and creates clouds. Soon, thunderstorms form and it starts to rain.

All hurricanes begin as cyclones but not all cyclones become storms or hurricanes. Some die out a few days after they start. They don’t have enough energy to become a hurricane. When winds are stronger than 119 km an hour a storm officially becomes a hurricane.

Structure of a hurricane

The centre of a hurricane is called the eye, a calm area with little rainfall. It is about 30 to 50 km wide. Inside the eye the sea can rise up to one metre because the air moves up.

The eyewall is around the eye. This is an area of thunderstorms, rain and the strongest winds—up to 300 km an hour.

Then come long bands of rain clouds that are curved towards the centre of the hurricane.

How Hurricanes Move

In the northern hemisphere hurricanes normally move in a westward direction and then they turn north and northeast. Their path takes them away from the warm tropical water of the equator. When hurricanes move over colder water or over land they lose a lot of their energy. They slow down and as time goes on, they disperse. In the southern hemisphere their path leads them to the south and southeast.

Hurricane Names

When a tropical storm forms over the Caribbean Sea it gets a name. Every year the first storm of the season is given a name that starts with the letter A, the second storm gets a name starting with B and so on.

Years ago only women's names were used for tropical storms. Today male and female names alternate –for example, the first storm is named Alexandra, the second one Billy, then Catherine etc.
Each year new names are used so that you can connect a storm to a certain year.

Hurricane Damage

Hurricanes can cause a lot of damage. They bring along strong winds and heavy rainfall. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and destroyed New Orleans. Many people died and hundreds of thousands had to leave the city. When a hurricane reaches land the winds can knock down small buildings, tear off roofs of houses and uproot trees. Waves produce floods around the coast. The surface water can rise up to 5 metres. This is called a storm surge.

Hurricane Katrina

On Monday, August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit the American coast near New Orleans. The storm had formed over the Caribbean Sea almost a week earlier. As it moved on towards the American coastline it grew more and more powerful. It became a Category 5 hurricane and the fourth largest storm that has ever been recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. Winds reached speeds of over 340 km an hour. Although the centre of the hurricane did not pass directly over New Orleans most of the city was flooded by the storm.
New Orleans is located in a really dangerous area. It lies above the Gulf of Mexico where many storms and hurricanes pass through. The Mississippi River also runs through the middle of the city. Because most of New Orleans lies below sea level, high banks of earth, called levees, were built around the city to protect it from flooding . Thousands of pumps have been installed to drain the water away.
Katrina brought along heavy rainfall and parts of the levee broke. About 80 % of the city was flooded. Shortly before the storm hit New Orleans about 20,000 people were able to escape to the Superdome, one of the town's largest stadiums.
Most of the city's population was evacuated , but about one hundred thousand had to stay behind, mostly poor people and blacks who had no cars and couldn't get out. They were trapped in the floods for days without power and water.
In the days after the disaster chaos spread throughout New Orleans. People broke into shops and stole things they needed, like food and water. Violence increased and gun shots could be heard throughout the city. Many people were trapped on rooftops for days before they got any help.
The government and the city authorities were not very well prepared for such a disaster . There were no plans for getting people out of the city. President Bush waited for four days before he visited the region. Thousands of people died in one of the biggest catastrophes in American history.

Text 5
THE ALPS

The Alps are the youngest and highest mountain system in Europe. They stretch across the western and southern part of the continent in a broad arc. The mountain range starts near the Mediterranean Seaon the border between France and Italy. Then it curves north- and eastward through northern Italy, Switzerland Liechtenstein, southern Germany, Austria and Slovenia.

The Alps are about 1,000 km long, the broadest section over 260 km wide. The highest peak, Mont Blanc, situated on the border between France, Italy and Switzerland, rises 4807 meters above sea level . Other famous peaks are the Monte Rosa, the Matterhorn, the Großglockner and the Zugspitze.

The whole mountain range is divided into three sections:

- The western Alps lie west of the Great St. Bernard Pass and include the highest mountains.
- The central Alps lie between the Great St. Bernard and Lake Constance.
- The eastern Alps stretch east of Lake Constance into Austria, northern Italy, southern Germany and Slovenia. They are the lowest section of the mountain range.

How the Alps were formed

Millions of years ago the area of today's Alps was covered by a large sea that separated Europe and Africa. The southern land mass started moving northwards. This movement folded rock layers at the bottom of the sea. Heat and pressure transformed the rock and pushed the material upwards. Today these regions are the highest parts of the Alps. Most of the newly formed rock is granite and gneiss, but many ranges consist of limestone which also formed on the seabed.

During the Ice Age, which started about a million years ago, the Alps were covered with a thick blanket of snow. Glaciers moved down valleys and made them wider and deeper. As they moved they took rock and other material with them, creating moraines. When glaciers started to melt water filled up behind these natural dams and created the alpine lakes we know today.

The largest of these glaciers is the Aletsch in Switzerland which reaches a length of about 25 km. The longest glacier of the eastern Alps is the 8 km long Pasterze, at the foot of the Großglockner.

The ice and snow of the alpine regions helped create the large rivers of today : the Rhine, Rhone, Danube and the Po.

Climate

In general, the Alps have a highlands climate. Higher areas are colder than the valleys and they get more rainfall and snow because cold air cannot hold as much moisture as warm air.

Sometimes warm dry foehn winds, blow downward along the mountain sides. The air originates in the Mediterranean area, climbs over the southern Alps where it loses almost all of its moisture and on the back side becomes so dry and warm that

its melts the snow and ice . This often leads to a rise in temperature of up to 20 °C in the colder valleys.

Plants and vegetation

Many kinds of plants grow in the various areas of the Alps. The valleys have rich, green pastures with beech and oak trees growing in the lower regions. These trees are deciduous, which means they lose their leaves each year.

The higher areas are dominated by evergreens mainly spruce, pine and fir trees. Above the tree line, which is located between 1700 and 2000 meters above sea level you can find alpine meadows, mosses, shrubs and unique flowers like the Edelweiss. The highest parts of the Alps (regions above 2 800 metres) are covered with snow, ice and barren rock.

Animals

Animals living in alpine regions must become used to living in higher mountain locations.

The ibex is a sturdy wild goat that lives above the tree line. alpine marmots are thick-bodied squirrels that hibernate in burrows. The chamois is a graceful animal that looks like an antelope.

Environmental problems

In the past two centuries many changes have taken place in the alpine region. Increased industrialisation and tourism have led to air and water pollution, slope erosion and the destruction of forests. Increased trade between European Union countries has led to growing road traffic.

The people of alpine valleys suffer from dust ,dirt and noise produced by traffic. It is one of the big aims of the European Union to get more traffic onto railroads in order to reduce pollution and make the Alps a better place to live and relax.

Text 6
ROCK

Rock is the hard material that most of the earth's crust is made up of. Mountains, coastlines, valleys and plains are made up of different kinds of rock. In some places soil lies over rock formations. They are often eroded and made smaller during the course of the earth's history. Sometimes broken parts of rock lie on top of the earth's surface. Tiny bits of them make up sand or soil.

Most rocks contain crystals of two or more different minerals. Granite for example contains grains of quartz and feldspar.

People use rocks for many different things. They play an important role in the construction industry. Concrete, for example, is made up of stones, sand and gravel and mixed with cement. Rocks are also used to make medicine, weapons and cosmetics. Various types of rock have been used to make historic monuments, like the ancient Egyptian pyramids.

Rock that contains metals is called ore. Iron, copper, lead, gold, and uranium are among the most important ores. Aluminum is produced out of a rock called bauxite. Other rocks contain valuable minerals, like diamonds or other gems.

Geologists are scientists who study the origin and composition of rocks. This gives them more information on the history of our planet. Rocks can also reveal how life evolved and which events shaped the Earth and the solar system.

Rocks are often classified by their hardness. They may be soft like talc, which you can scratch with your fingernail. On the other side of the scale diamonds are the hardest known rocks on earth. They are used to cut other minerals or in oil drilling.

Geologists often identify rocks by studying their formations. These often contain fossils that show scientists how old the rock may be.

Types of rock

Igneous rock

Igneous rock is hot molten rock that comes from below the earth's surface. It forms when magma comes to the surface from cracks in the Earth's crust. When it emerges through pipes and erupts volcanoes are formed. Such rock hardens quickly when it cools down. Dark colored igneous rocks are called basalts. They are formed either on the ocean's floor or where lava flows occur.

Granite is a gray or white igneous rock that crystallizes slowly below the earth's surface. It is often used as building materials and in homes.

Sedimentary rock

Sediments are small pieces of rock that are transported by wind, water or glaciers. In the course of their movement they break apart into smaller pieces.

Sedimentary rock is formed when a river carries pieces of broken rock along with it and slowly deposits them onto its bed. On the ocean floor, dead plants and animals are deposited during the course of millions of years. These organic sediments harden and turn into rock.

Sandstone and limestone are two of the most important and widespread sedimentary rocks. These sediments contain fossil fuels, like oil and gas. Limestone is made up of shells and skeletons of living things. It forms in shallow ocean water. The white cliffs of Dover are the most famous natural limestone areas on earth. Sandstone is made up of quartz that has been pressed over the ages. It is often white or yellowish.

Metamorphic rock

Metamorphic rock is rock that changes through heat and pressure in the deeper layers in the earth. The minerals in these rocks are chemically changed. Granite for example is turned into gneiss. Limestone turns into marble and sandstone can turn into quartzite.

Rock cycle

Rock is formed, destroyed and reformed in a cycle. It breaks into pieces through erosion. These pieces settle down onto the floor of oceans and rivers and become sedimentary rock. When such rock sinks deeper and deeper it turns into metamorphic rock.

Pressure can bring such rock to the surface where it can erupt in the form of volcanoes. On the surface rock breaks down again through erosion and is transported in rivers and streams. The cycle then starts from the beginning.

Such a rock cycle takes millions of year to complete.

Text 7
GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes consist of five lakes in North America, on the border between the United States and Canada. Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Lake Superior make up the greatest area of freshwater in the world. The five lakes have an area of about 100,000 square miles (250 000 square kilometres). Only one of them, Lake Michigan lies completely in the United States, the others form a natural border between the United States and Canada.

The St Lawrence Seaway, opened in 1959, connects the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean, making it possible for cargo vessels to travel all the way to Chicago, more than a thousand miles from the coast. The lakes are also connected through a series of rivers and canals with the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The Great Lakes are not all at the same sea level. Lake Superior lies at an elevation of 183 meters, while Lake Ontario lies lowest, at 74 meters above sea level. Niagara Falls, between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, causes a drop of a hundred meters.

A system of locks and canals makes it possible for ships to travel between the Lakes. During the winter months, large parts of the Great Lakes freeze but icebreakers keep shipping lanes open most of the time.

How the lakes were formed

The basin of today's lakes was formed about 2 billion years ago through volcanic activity. Recently the glaciers of the Ice Age repeatedly advanced and retreated throughout the region. They pushed rocks and other material with them and dug out a huge depression which filled itself with melting water after the last withdrawal of the glaciers, about 20,000 years ago. Together with the five Great Lakes thousands of other, smaller lakes were formed.

The Great Lakes gets most of their water from rain and snow throughout the year. Groundwater makes up most of the rest because there are only few large rivers flowing into the lakes. Due to global warming water levels have been going down in recent years.

Economic Importance of the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes have contributed very much to the economic development of the United States and Canada. Millions of tons of raw material, including ore and coal, as well as industrial goods are transported along the Great Lakes every year. About 70% of all the iron ore of the United States is mined near Lake Superior. Large freighters bring it to all parts of the world.

Much of the coal produced in the Appalachian coal fields are brought to the Great Lakes by train where they are loaded onto cargo ships and exported to other areas.

Farming crops of the American Midwest, including corn and wheat are brought to the harbours along the Great Lakes where they are exported to other countries.

Because water transport is very cheap, farmers in the American Midwest and Canada can compete with their rivals in other continents.

Shipping connection to the ocean

Although the Saint Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes Waterway make the Great Lakes accessible to ocean-going vessels, shifts in shipping to wider ocean-going container ships—which do not fit through the locks on these routes—have limited container shipping on the lakes. Most Great Lakes trade is of bulk material, and bulk freighters of Seawaymax-size or less can move throughout the entire lakes and out to the Atlantic. Larger ships are confined to working within the lakes. Only barges can access the Illinois Waterway system providing access to the Gulf of Mexico via the Mississippi River. Despite their vast size, large sections of the Great Lakes freeze over in winter, interrupting most shipping from January to March. Some icebreakers ply the lakes, keeping the shipping lanes open through other periods of ice on the lakes.

The Great Lakes are connected by the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to the Gulf of Mexico via the Illinois River (from the Chicago River) and the Mississippi River. An alternate track is via the Illinois River (from Chicago), to the Mississippi, up the Ohio, and then through the Tennessee–Tombigbee Waterway (a combination of a series of rivers and lakes and canals), to Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Commercial tug-and-barge traffic on these waterways is heavy.

Pleasure boats can enter or exit the Great Lakes by way of the Erie Canal and Hudson River in New York. The Erie Canal connects to the Great Lakes at the east end of Lake Erie (at Buffalo, New York) and at the south side of Lake Ontario (at Oswego, New York).

Recreation and tourism

Millions of Americans spend much of their free time on and around the Great Lakes. Residents of Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee and other big cities flock to the beaches to escape the stressful life of the inner cities. Sailing and other water sports are widespread due to strong winds that prevail in the Great Lakes region. Fishing is a main source of income for many people in the area.

History

The first settlers sailed down the Great Lakes about 300 years ago. In those days they were mainly fur traders who made business with Indians. The first canals in the 19th century made it possible to travel from lake to lake.

During the course of the 20th century the water quality of the Great Lakes deteriorated, largely because of pollution by cargo vessels and industries along its shores. Recently the United States and Canady have been spending millions every year to raise the quality of the world’s largest freshwater region.

Text 8
THE KURDS - PEOPLE WITHOUT A STATE

The Kurds are an ancient people of the Middle East. They live in a mountainous region called Kurdistan, which includes parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Kurds, who are Muslims and speak a language that is like Persian, have lived in this region for thousands of years, but they have never had a country of their own. Instead they have been oppressed a lot by other people.

Kurdish is a collection of related dialects spoken by the Kurds. It is mainly spoken in those parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey which comprise Kurdistan. Kurdish holds official status in Iraq as a national language alongside Arabic, is recognized in Iran as a regional language, and in Armenia as a minority language. The Kurds are recognized as a people with a distinct language by Arab geographers such as Al-Masudi since the 10th century.

Many Kurds are either bilingual or multilingual, speaking the language of their respective nation of origin, such as Arabic, Persian, and Turkish as a second language alongside their native Kurdish, while those in diaspora communities often speak three or more languages. Turkified and Arabised Kurds often speak little or no Kurdish.

There are about 30 million Kurds today. Almost half of them live in Turkey, where they make up 20% of that population. Other countries in the Middle East with a large Kurdish population are Iran, Iraq and Syria. Many Kurds have come to Europe where they live in Germany, France, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

According to a report by the Council of Europe, approximately 1.3 million Kurds live in Western Europe. The earliest immigrants were Kurds from Turkey, who settled in Germany, Austria, the Benelux countries, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and France during the 1960s. Successive periods of political and social turmoil in the region during the 1980s and 1990s brought new waves of Kurdish refugees, mostly from Iran and Iraq under Saddam Hussein, came to Europe. In recent years, many Kurdish asylum seekers from both Iran and Iraq have settled in the United Kingdom (especially in the town of Dewsbury and in some northern areas of London), which has sometimes caused media controversy over their right to remain.There have been tensions between Kurds and the established Muslim community in Dewsbury, which is home to very traditional mosques such as the Markazi. Since the beginning of the turmoil in Syria many of the refugees of the Syrian Civil War are Syrian Kurds and as a result many of the current Syrian asylum seekers in Germany are of Kurdish descent.

There was substantial immigration of ethnic Kurds in Canada and the United States, who are mainly political refugees and immigrants seeking economic opportunity. According to a 2011 Statistics Canada household survey, there were 11,685 people of Kurdish ethnic background living in Canada, and according to the 2011 Census, 10,325 Canadians spoke Kurdish languages. In the United States, Kurdish immigrants started

to settle in large numbers in Nashville in 1976, which is now home to the largest Kurdish community in the United States and is nicknamed Little Kurdistan. Kurdish population in Nashville is estimated to be around 11,000. The total number of ethnic Kurds residing in the United States is estimated by the US Census Bureau to be 20,591. Other sources claim that there are 20,000 ethnic Kurds in the United States.

Kurds often live in tribes in the countryside. They are farmers who grow cotton, tobacco and sugar beets. Some of them are nomads who raise sheep and goats. They bring their animals to mountain pastures in the summer and return to their home villages in the winter. Many Kurds have specialized on the production of textiles and handicrafts, especially carpets and rugs. In the past decades some have gone to larger cities outside Kurdistan, like Istanbul or Ankara.

After the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the beginning of the 20 th century new states like Iraq or Syria were created in the Middle East but not a separate Kurdistan. At first the Kurds were promised their own country but then the new Middle Eastern states did not want an independent Kurdistan. Since this period Kurds have always fought for their independence. This has led to conflicts in the countries in which they live.

The Kurds were treated very badly, especially by the Turkish government, who called them "Mountain Kurds". They forbade them to speak their language and didn't wear traditional Kurdish clothes in the cities.

In Iraq the Kurds have faced a similar repression. In the 1980s they helped Iran in the war against Iraq. Saddam Hussein punished the Kurds by attacking villages with chemical weapons. Thousands were killed, many fled to Iran. After the Gulf War, in which the Kurds once again started a rebellion against the Iraqi government, the United States created a safe zone for the Kurds in northern Iraq.

In 1978 Abdullah Öcalan founded the Kurdistan Workers' Party, considered to be a terrorist organization and which has been fighting against the Turkish army. In 1999 Turkish authorities captured Öcalan in Kenya. He was put on trial in Turkey and sentenced to death. But the sentence was later on turned into life in prison.

Some Turkish leaders have realized that more democracy and less repression may be the only way to improve the life of the Kurds in Turkey. Others think, however, that the success of the Iraqi Kurds may encourage their Turkish neighbors.

Text 9
TOURISM

Tourism is travelling for pleasure or to enjoy yourself away from the place you live. People do this for many different reasons – to have fun, visit other countries and learn about other cultures or just relax from stressful working life. Tourists go to various destinations - countries with great landmarks, places with lovely beaches or simply areas of wilderness and untouched nature.

In the last few decades tourism has grown very much, mostly because people's lifestyles have changed. They don't want to stay at home any more. They spend more money on travelling than previous generations did. Travelling has also become cheaper and more affordable. The rise of budget airlines has made it possible to afford trips to faraway countries.

Types of Tourism

Beach tourism. Many tourists spend their holidays on beaches. They relax, go bathing or just enjoy the salty sea breeze and the ocean. Spending holidays on beaches has had a long tradition for over one and a half centuries.

Winter tourism. Winter tourism started out in the middle of the 19th century when wealthy Europeans went to St. Moritz and other alpine resorts. In Europe and in the American Rockies skiing resorts attract millions of people every year. Various lifts bring skiers to altitudes of over 3,000 meters.

Medical tourism. People go to other countries for medical treatment and operations. Irish women, for example, go to the UK because abortions are forbidden in their country. West Europeans go to Eastern Europe for dental treatment. Americans go to Mexico for plastic surgery and other operations.

Educational tourism. Young people live as exchange students in other countries, where they go to school and study the language and culture of the host country.

Sports tourism. An increasing number of sports fans travel to places where special events are being held. The Olympic Games and world championships attract visitors from around the world.

Package Holidays. Organized tours were started in the middle of the 19th century by a British businessman, Thomas Cook. Package tours are made up of travel to and accommodation at the destination. A tourist agency often provides everything from a plane flight to a rental car. Sometimes such package tours offer a combination of beach holidays and sightseeing trip.

Spa Tourism. Spas have been popular since Roman times. In 16th century Britain Bath became the center of spa tourism for the rich population. During the 19th century spas emerged all over Europe. Today people go to spas for the healing effect of mineral waters as well as for offer wellness treatment, massages, steam baths and other services.

Adventure tourism. In the past few decades trips to faraway exotic places have become popular. Tourists looking for thrilling activities go mountaineering, rafting, trekking , or even to remote places in the rainforest.

Religious tourism. Religious tourists go on pilgrimages to holy sites. Roman Catholics, for example, travel to Lourdes, Fatima or the Vatican in Europe. Muslims are required to go to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. Varanasi , on the banks of the Ganges River, is the spiritual capital of the Hindus.

Ecotourism. Recently many people have chosen a type of tourism that does not damage the environment. They avoid travelling by plane or do not buy souvenirs that are made out of endangered plants and animals. Some holiday offers give tourists the chance to take part in environmental projects.

History of tourism

People have been travelling for pleasure since ancient times. In ancient Egypt, religious festivals attracted people from the whole Nile Valley. Ancient Greeks travelled regularly to the site of their gods. Romans travelled to Greece, Sicily and other places in the empire. Wealthy Romans had second homes near the sea where they spent the summer.

During the Renaissance educated Europeans embarked on what was called the Grand Tour , a trip to several European countries to enjoy art and architecture and get educated.

In the 19th century the invention of the steam engine made it possible for people to travel by boat and train. Regular passenger services from Europe to America started in the 20th century. The invention of the automobile made it possible to travel larger distances by car.

In the 1960s going on holidays by plane became affordable for many. Jumbo jets of the early 1970s were capable of carrying over 400 passengers and reducing costs of travelling to other continents even further.

Importance of tourism for countries

Tourism is a worldwide industry. In many countries it is the most important largest source of income. Global tourism is growing at a rate of 4% a year.

The tourist industry provides jobs and brings a country foreign currencies. Many groups profit from tourism: travel agencies, store owners ,airports and airlines, hotels, restaurants, etc..

However, mass tourism, can also lead to environmental problems. It can pollute beaches or create noise in otherwise quiet regions. Popular tourist attractions must be controlled by authorities.

Recent developments in tourism

In the past years there has been a trend towards shorter holiday breaks during the year. People like to take a few days off to travel. The internet has changed the way people organize their holidays. Booking plane tickets online is easy and prices are often lower than with travel agents.

International tourism has suffered many drawbacks, like the 9/11 attacks, which made security at airports stricter and travelling more difficult. The tsunami that hit Southeast Asia in 2004 killed over 250,000 people including thousands of tourists.

Text 10
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Developing countries are the poor countries of our world. While most of them are located in many parts of Africa and Asia, some countries in South and Central America are also referred to as developing countries. About 70% of the world's people live in underdeveloped countries.

Many of these nations have an economy that is based on farming. They do not produce enough of the goods that their growing population needs. As a result, many people in developing countries live in poverty.

In developing countries, governments control many sectors of the economy. Industries, banks and the energy sector often belong to the state. Today, some countries are slowly opening up to foreign investment. They are allowing private companies and businesspersons to bring in money to finance various projects.

In the last few decades, countries around the world have grown from developing countries to fully industrialised nations. In Asia, for example, the so-called "Four Tigers" - South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan - managed to develop to industrial nations between the 1960s and the 1990s.

Drawing a line between developed nations and developing countries is not very easy. Some countries are in-between, but still growing at a rapid pace. Among them are China, Brazil, India, Mexico and others.

Economic experts use the GDP per capita of a country to determine whether it is a developing country or not. While the wealthiest countries of the world have a GDP of over 40,000 US dollars, most of the poorest countries are under $1,000 per year. Countries with a GDP per capital of under $4,000 are referred to as developing countries.

Characteristics of a developing country

- Low income – Developing countries get most of their income from selling farming products and raw materials. They often do not have industries that produce expensive goods for the world markets. People live in poverty because they do not have the money to buy everyday goods.
- Hunger and starvation – Especially in Africa, widespread droughts lead to food shortages so that these countries are dependent on food imports.
- Debt - Governments borrow money and accumulate huge debts that they cannot pay back.
- Unemployment – Up to 50% of the population in developing countries, especially younger people, have no job. A large part of the population works in farming. Industries cannot develop because of many unskilled workers.
- Lack of infrastructure – Many developing countries do not have basic services that their population needs. There are not enough roads for transportation. They lack schools and colleges, as well as doctors and hospitals.

- High population growth – Many Third World countries grow at the rate of up to 3% per year and more.
- Exploding cities – Many people are leaving the countryside and moving to the big cities, where they live in slums, ghettos and shantytowns on the outskirts. As a result, these metropolitan areas are becoming overcrowded and do not have facilities for millions of new residents.
- Sanitation – Many developing countries lack clean water. Dirty water is often untreated and people use it for washing and drinking.
- Lower life expectancy – The population in developing countries does not live as long as in wealthier countries. While people in Japan and Northern Europe have an average life expectancy of over 80, the population in Central Africa lives to the age of 50 on average.
- Corruption is a problem in many Third World countries. Money does not reach the people who need it. It is rather used for government project or buying weapons.
- Political conflicts - Some developing countries still suffer from the effects of colonialisation, which are difficult to overcome. Conflicts between rival groups lead to power struggles and unstable governments. In some of these countries, civil wars have been going on for many years.

Text 11
CITIES

Today's modern cities often have three characteristic areas. The centre of the city is called downtown. It consists of stores, banks, government buildings and cultural attractions. Many people come to work in the downtown area. In large cities the downtown area is full of skyscrapers.

An industrial region with factories, warehouses, mills and other industries lies around the downtown area.

Suburbs are the places farthest away from the city centre. They are new residential areas where most people live. Suburbs have their own stores and shopping malls but people often have to travel an hour or longer to work downtown.

History of Cities

In prehistoric times people were hunters and travelled around. They never lived in one place. As they started to grow crops and raise animals they settled in villages which later grew to larger towns.

Ancient Cities. The first real cities emerged in Mesopotamia about 5,000 years ago. In ancient cities people were not only farmers, they also were craftsmen. People lived together in larger houses or buildings. Many cities had walls around them that protected the inhabitants from enemies. The central part of the city included a temple or a place to pray.

The biggest ancient city was Rome. Up to one million people lived there, in many aspects Rome was a modern city with streets, market places, arenas, parks and even a sewage system.

The people in ancient cities were divided into classes. Government officials, soldiers and priests belonged to the upper classes. The middle and lower classes were made up of merchants, farmers and craft workers. Newcomers and slaves had to live outside the city and were seen as outcasts.

Medieval cities. After the fall of the Roman Empire the population of cities fell. Trading between cities, which the Romans started, stopped again.

Medieval cities were small in size. The centre was often occupied by a Gothic cathedral, the city's main church. It was the most expensive building in the city and showed that religion was very important during the Middle Ages.

As in ancient cities, medieval ones were dirty and diseases spread quickly. Land in the city was very expensive. Cities could not expand because of the walls around them. In some cases, city governments tore down the walls and rebuilt them farther away from the city.

During the Middle Ages members of the family, servants and workers often lived in the same house. Craft workers and merchants were organized in guilds, a new economic class in the cities. There were guilds for bakers, goldsmiths, tailors and other groups.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages trade started to become important again. Venice, one of the biggest cities of the time, became a centre of trade in the Mediterranean region. Other trading centres included northern German cities, Hamburg and Lübeck, Antwerp in Belgium and London.

Industrial cities. The Industrial Revolution and the growth of factories changed the lives of many people. Many people started to leave their farms in the countryside and moved to the cities where they hoped to get jobs in new factories. Machines could do work much quicker than people. Many skilled craft workers lost their work.

The industrial city focused on factories, warehouses, railway lines and harbours. Workers lived in cheap terraced houses. The central parts of the city were very crowded; the air was polluted by the smoke coming out of the factories. Garbage and rusting metal was dumped everywhere. Factory workers had tiring jobs, in which they worked up to 16 hours a day.

Only few people became rich during the Industrial Revolution. Factory owners made big profits and built themselves houses outside the city.

Modern cities of the 20th century. In the 20th century cities grew more than ever before. Architects discovered a new way to get more space in the city. They built skyscrapers.

As time went on more and more people moved away from the inner parts of the city and settled down in the suburbs, which were places where it was quieter and where the quality of life was better. These suburbs became small towns with their own office buildings and shopping centres. Residents can work and live there without having to travel long distances to the centre. Poorer people, however, stayed in the centres and formed ghettos. They lacked the money to buy houses or flats in the more expensive suburbs.

City problems

Modern cities all over the world face the same problems. One of them is poor housing. People often live in old houses or huts that don’t have electricity or sanitation. As city population grows governments don’t have the money to build modern apartment buildings.

Cars and industries are polluting city air and rivers more and more. Waste that people throw away is burned or ends up in landfills. All of this makes modern cities an unhealthy place to live in.

Especially during morning and evening rush hours cities become packed with vehicles. Daily traffic jams make it impossible for people to get to work in time. City authorities are spending more and more money on public transportation and are talking other steps to reduce traffic in cities. A few years ago the London mayor made people pay to drive their cars into the city centre.

Cities of today face many social problems. Crime, alcoholism and drug addiction is especially high in cities. Many young people are unemployed.

Even though residents of cities have a higher standard of living there remain many poor people. Government organizations work hard to get rid of poverty. They try to give such people better education and jobs.

Text 12
THE SUNBELT OF THE SOUTHERN AND WESTERN UNITED STATES

The Sun Belt is the region in the United States that stretches across the Southern and Southwestern portions of the country from Florida to California. The Sunbelt typically includes the states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California.

Major U.S. cities placed within the Sun Belt according to every definition include Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Orlando, and Phoenix. However, some extend the definition of Sun Belt as far north as the cities Denver, Raleigh-Durham, Memphis, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco.

Throughout U.S. history, especially after World War II, the Sun Belt saw abundant population growth in these cities as well as many others and has been an important area socially, politically, and economically.

History of Sun Belt Growth

The term "Sun Belt" is said to have been coined in 1969 by writer and political analyst Kevin Phillips in his book *The Emerging Republican Majority* to describe the area of the U.S. that encompassed the region from Florida to California and included industries like oil, military, and aerospace but also many retirement communities. Following Phillips' introduction of the term, it became widely used in the 1970s and beyond.

Although the term Sun Belt was not used until 1969, growth had been occurring in the southern U.S. since World War II. This is because, at the time, many military manufacturing jobs were moving from the Northeast U.S. (the region known as the Rust Belt) to the South and the West. Growth in the South and West then further continued after the war and later grew substantially near the U.S./Mexico border in the late 1960s when Mexican and other Latin American immigrants began to move north.

In the 1970s, Sun Belt became the official term to describe the area and growth continued even further as the U.S. South and West became more important economically than the Northeast. Part of the region's growth was a direct result of increasing agriculture and the earlier green revolution which introduced new farming technologies. In addition, because of the prevalence of agriculture and related jobs in the region, immigration in the area continued to grow as immigrants from neighboring Mexico and other areas were looking for jobs in the U.S.

On top of immigration from areas outside the U.S., the Sun Belt's population also grew via migration from other parts of the U.S. in the 1970s. This was due to the invention of affordable and effective air conditioning. It additionally involved the movement of retirees from Northern states to the South, especially Florida and Arizona. Air conditioning played an especially significant role in the growth of many Southern cities like those in Arizona where temperatures can sometimes exceed 100 F (37 C). For example, the average temperature in July in Phoenix, Arizona is 90 F (32 C), while it is just over 70 F (21 C) in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Milder winters in the Sun Belt also made the region attractive to retirees as much of it is relatively comfortable year-round and it allows them to escape cold winters. In Minneapolis, the average temperature in January is just over 10 F (-12 C) while in Phoenix it is 55 F (12 C).

Additionally, new types of businesses and industries like aerospace, defense and military, and oil moved from the North to the Sun Belt as the region was cheaper and there were fewer labor unions. This further added to the Sun Belt's growth and importance economically. Oil, for example, helped Texas grow economically, while military installations drew people, defense industries, and aerospace firms to the desert Southwest and California, and favorable weather led to increased tourism in places like Southern California, Las Vegas, and Florida.

By 1990, Sun Belt cities like Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Dallas, and San Antonio were among the ten largest in the U.S. In addition, because of the Sun Belt's relatively high proportion of immigrants in its population, its overall birth rate was higher than the rest of the U.S.

Despite this growth, however, the Sun Belt did experience its share of problems in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, the region's economic prosperity has been uneven and at one point 23 out of the 25 largest metropolitan regions with the lowest per capita incomes in the U.S. were in the Sun Belt. In addition, the rapid growth in places like Los Angeles caused various environmental problems, one of the most significant of which was and still is air pollution.

The Sun Belt Today

Today, growth in the Sun Belt has slowed, but its larger cities still remain as some of the largest and fastest-growing in the U.S. Nevada, for example, is among the nation's fastest-growing states due to its high immigration. Between 1990 and 2008, the state's population increased by a whopping 216% (from 1,201,833 in 1990 to 2,600,167 in 2008). Also seeing dramatic growth, Arizona saw a population increase of 177% and Utah grew by 159% between 1990 and 2008.

The San Francisco Bay Area in California with the major cities of San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose still also remains a growing area, while growth in outlying areas like Nevada has decreased significantly due to nationwide economic problems. With this decrease in growth and outmigration, housing prices in cities like Las Vegas have plummeted in recent years.

Despite recent economic problems, the U.S. South and West (the areas that comprise the Sun Belt) still remain the fastest growing regions in the country. Between 2000 and 2008, the number one fastest growing area, the West, saw a population change of 12.1% while the second, the South, saw a change of 11.5%, making the Sun Belt still, as it has been since the 1960s, one of the most important growth regions in the U.S.

Text 13
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Tourism is a burgeoning industry in China. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 57.6 million foreign visitors entered the country in 2011, generating over $40 billion dollars in revenue. China is now the third most visited country in the world, behind only France and the United States. However, unlike many other developed economies, tourism is still considered a relatively new phenomenon in China. As the country industrializes, tourism will become one of its primary and fastest growing economic sectors. Based on current UNWTO forecasts, China is expected to become the world's most visited country by 2020.

History of Tourism Development in China

Shortly after the Chairman's death, China's most famous economic reformist, Deng Xiaoping, opened up the Middle Kingdom to outsiders. Contrary to Maoist ideology, Deng saw the monetary potential in tourism and began to promote it intensely. China quickly developed its own travel industry. Major hospitality and transportation facilities were constructed or renovated. New jobs such as service personnel and professional guides were created, and a National Tourism Association was established. Foreign visitors quickly flocked to this once forbidden destination.

In 1978, an estimated 1.8 million tourists entered the country, with the majority coming from neighboring British Hong Kong, Portuguese Macau, and Taiwan. By 2000, China welcomed over 10 million new overseas visitors, excluding the aforementioned three locations. Tourists from Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States comprised the largest share of that inbound population.

During the 1990s, the Chinese central government also issued several policies to encourage the Chinese to travel domestically, as a means of stimulating consumption. In 1999, over 700 million trips were made by domestic tourists. Outbound tourism by Chinese citizens recently become popular, as well. This is due to a rise in the Chinese middle-class. The pressure presented by this new class of citizens with disposable income has caused the government to ease international travel restrictions greatly. By the end of 1999, fourteen countries, mainly in Southeast and East Asia, were made designated overseas destinations for Chinese residents. Today, over a hundred countries have made it onto China's approved destination list, including the United States and many European countries.

Since the reform, China's tourism industry has registered consistent growth year-after-year. The only period in which the country experienced a decline in inbound numbers are the months following the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. The brutal military crackdown of peaceful pro-democracy protestors painted a poor image of the People's Republic to the international community. Many travelers ended up avoiding China based on fear and personal morals.

Tourism Development in Modern China

When China joined the WTO in 2001, travel restrictions in the country were relaxed further. The WTO reduced formalities and barriers for cross-border travelers, and

global competition helped cut costs. These changes additionally enhanced China's position as a country for financial investment and international business. The rapidly developing business environment has helped the tourism industry prosper. Many businessmen and entrepreneurs often visit popular sites while on their business trips.
Some economists also believe the Olympic Games fostered an increase in tourism numbers due to worldwide exposure. The Beijing Games not only put "The Bird's Nest" and "Water Cube" on center stage but some of Beijing's most incredible wonders were displayed as well. Moreover, the opening and closing ceremonies showcased to the world China's rich culture and history. Shortly after the conclusion of the games, Beijing held a Tourism Industry Development Conference to present new plans to boost profits by riding the game's momentum. At the conference, a multi-year plan was set in place to increase the number of inbound tourists by seven percent. To realize this goal, the government plan on taking a series of measures, including stepping up tourism promotion, develop more leisure facilities, and reduce air pollution. A total of 83 leisure tourism projects were presented to potential investors. These projects and goals, along with the country's continued modernization will undoubtedly set the tourism industry on a path of continuous growth into the foreseeable future.
Tourism in China has received a major expansion since the days under Chairman Mao. It is no longer uncommon to see the country on the cover of a Lonely Planet or Frommers. Travel memoirs about the Middle Kingdom are on bookstore shelves everywhere, and travelers from all over are now able to share a personal photo of their Asian adventures with the world. It is not surprising that the tourism industry would thrive so well in China. The country is filled with endless wonders. From the Great Wall to the Terracotta Army, and from sprawling mountain valleys to neon metropolises, there is something here for everyone. Forty years ago, no one could have ever predicted how much wealth this country was capable of generating. Chairman Mao certainly didn't see it. And he definitely did not foresee the irony that preceded his death. It is amusing how the man who detested tourism would one day become a tourist attraction, as a preserved body on display for capitalistic gains.

Text 14
BELGIUM COLONIALISM

Belgium is a small country in northwest Europe that joined Europe's race for colonies in the late 19th century. Many European countries wanted to colonize distant parts of the world in order to exploit the resources and "civilize" the inhabitants of these less-developed countries.

Belgium gained independence in 1830. Then, King Leopold II came to power in 1865 and believed that colonies would greatly enhance Belgium's wealth and prestige. Leopold's cruel, greedy activities in the current Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi continue to affect the welfare of these countries today.

Exploration of and Claims to the Congo River Basin

European adventurers experienced great difficulty in exploring and colonizing the Congo River Basin, due to the region's tropical climate, disease, and the resistance of the natives. In the 1870s, Leopold II created an organization called the International African Association.

This sham was supposedly a scientific and philanthropic organization which would greatly improve the lives of native Africans by converting them to Christianity, ending the trade of enslaved people, and introducing European health and educational systems. King Leopold sent the explorer Henry Morton Stanley to the region. Stanley successfully made treaties with native tribes, set up military posts, and forced most Muslim traders of enslaved people out of the region. He acquired millions of square kilometers of central African land for Belgium.

However, most of Belgium's government leaders and citizens did not want to spend the exorbitant amount of money that would be needed to maintain distant colonies. At the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, other European countries did not want the Congo River region.

King Leopold II insisted that he would maintain this region as a free-trade zone, and he was given personal control of the region, which was nearly eighty times larger than Belgium. He named the region the "Congo Free State."

The Congo Free State, 1885-1908

Leopold promised that he would develop his private property to improve the lives of the native Africans. He quickly disregarded all of his Berlin Conference guidelines and began to economically exploit the region's land and inhabitants.

Due to industrialization, objects such as tires were now required in mass in Europe; thus, the African natives were forced to produce ivory and rubber. Leopold's army mutilated or killed any African who didn't produce enough of these coveted, profitable resources.

The Europeans burned African villages, farmland, and rainforest, and kept women as hostages until rubber and mineral quotas were met. Due to this brutality and European diseases, the native population dwindled by approximately ten million people. Leopold II took the enormous profits and built lavish buildings in Belgium.

Belgian Congo, 1908-1960

Leopold II tried mightily to conceal this abuse from the international public. However, many countries and individuals had learned of these atrocities by the early 20th century. Joseph Conrad set his popular novel Heart of Darkness in the Congo Free State and described European abuses.

The Belgian government forced Leopold to surrender his personal country in 1908. The Belgian government renamed the region the "Belgian Congo". The Belgian government and Catholic missions tried to aid the inhabitants by improving health and education and building an infrastructure, but the Belgians still exploited the region's gold, copper, and diamonds.

Independence for the Democratic Republic of the Congo

By the 1950s, many African countries embraced anti-colonialism, nationalism, equality, and opportunity under the Pan-Africanism movement. The Congolese, who by then had some rights such as owning property and voting in elections, began to demand independence.

Belgium wanted to grant independence over a thirty-year span, but under pressure from the United Nations, and in order to avoid a long, deadly war, Belgium decided to grant independence to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on June 30, 1960. Since then, DRC has experienced corruption, inflation, and several regime changes. The mineral-rich province of Katanga was voluntarily separated from DRC from 1960-1963. DRC was known as Zaire from 1971-1997.

Two civil wars in DRC have turned into the world's deadliest conflict since World War II. Millions have died from war, famine, or disease. Millions are now refugees. Today, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the third largest country by area in Africa and has approximately 70 million citizens. Its capital is Kinshasa, formerly named Leopoldville.

Ruanda-Urundi

The current countries of Rwanda and Burundi were once colonized by the Germans, who named the region Ruanda-Urundi. After Germany's defeat in World War I, however, Ruanda-Urundi was made a protectorate of Belgium. Belgium also exploited the land and people of Ruanda-Urundi, the Belgian Congo's neighbor to the east. Inhabitants were forced to pay taxes and grow cash crops such as coffee.

They were given very little education. However, by the 1960s, Ruanda-Urundi also began to demand independence, and Belgium ended its colonial empire when Rwanda and Burundi were granted independence in 1962.

Legacy of Colonialism in Rwanda-Burundi

The most important legacy of colonialism in Rwanda and Burundi involved the Belgians' obsession with racial, ethnic classification. The Belgians believed that the Tutsi ethnic group in Rwanda was racially superior to the Hutu ethnic group because the Tutsis had more "European" features. After many years of segregation, the tension erupted into the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which 850,000 people died.

Text 15
GLOBALIZATION IN THE MODERN WORLD

If you look at the tag on your shirt, chances are you would see that it was made in a country other than the one in which you sit right now. What's more, before it reached your wardrobe, this shirt could have very well been made with Chinese cotton sewed by Thai hands, shipped across the Pacific on a French freighter crewed by Spaniards to a Los Angeles harbor. This international exchange is just one example of globalization, a process that has everything to do with geography.

Definition and Examples of Globalization

Globalization is the process of increased interconnectedness among countries most notably in the areas of economics, politics, and culture. McDonald's in Japan, French films being played in Minneapolis, and the United Nations are all representations of globalization.

Improved Technology in Transportation and Telecommunications

What makes globalization possible is the ever-increasing capacity for and efficiency of how people and things move and communicate. In years past, people across the globe did not have the ability to communicate and could not interact without difficulty. Nowadays, a phone, instant message, fax, or video conference call can easily be used to connect people throughout the world. Additionally, anyone with the funds can book a plane flight and show up halfway across the world in a matter of hours. In short, the "friction of distance" is lessened, and the world begins to metaphorically shrink.

Movement of People and Capital

A general increase in awareness, opportunity, and transportation technology has allowed people to move about the world in search of a new home, a new job, or to flee a place of danger. Most migration takes place within or between developing countries, possibly because of lower standards of living and lower wages push individuals to places with a greater chance for economic success.

Additionally, capital (money) is being moved globally with the ease of electronic transference and a rise in perceived investment opportunities. Developing countries are a popular place for investors to place their capital because of the enormous room for growth.

Diffusion of Knowledge

The word 'diffusion' simply means to spread out, and that is exactly what any new found knowledge does. When a new invention or way of doing something pops up, it does not stay secret for long. A good example of this is the appearance of automotive farming machines in Southeast Asia, an area long home to manual agricultural labor.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Multinational Corporations

As global awareness of certain issues has risen, so too has the number of organizations that aim to deal with them. So-called non-governmental organizations bring together people unaffiliated with the government and can be nationally or globally focused. Many international NGOs deal with issues that do not pay attention to borders (such as global climate change, energy use, or child labor regulations). Examples of NGOs include Doctors Without Borders.

As countries are connected to the rest of the world (through increased communication and transportation) they immediately form what a business would call a market. What this means is that a particular population represents more people to buy a particular product or service. As more and more markets are opening up, business people from around the globe are coming together to form multinational corporations in order to access these new markets. Another reason that businesses are going global is that some jobs can be done by foreign workers at a much cheaper cost than domestic workers. This is referred to as outsourcing.

At its core globalization is an easing of borders, making them less important as countries become dependent on each other to thrive. Some scholars claim that governments are becoming less influential in the face of an increasingly economic world. Others contest this, insisting that governments are becoming more important because of the need for regulation and order in such a complex world system.

Is Globalization a Good Thing?

There is a heated debate about the true effects of globalization and if it really is such a good thing. Good or bad, though, there isn't much argument as to whether or not it is happening. Let's look at the positives and negatives of globalization, and you can decide for yourself whether or not it is the best thing for our world.

Positive Aspects of Globalization

- As more money is poured into developing countries, there is a greater chance for the people in those countries to economically succeed and increase their standard of living.
- Global competition encourages creativity and innovation and keeps prices for commodities/services in check.
- Developing countries are able to reap the benefits of current technology without undergoing many of the growing pains associated with the development of these technologies.
- Governments are able to better work together towards common goals now that there is an advantage in cooperation, an improved ability to interact and coordinate, and a global awareness of issues.
- There is greater access to foreign culture in the form of movies, music, food, clothing, and more. In short, the world has more choices.

Negative Aspects of Globalization

- Outsourcing, while it provides jobs to a population in one country, takes away those jobs from another country, leaving many without opportunities.
- Although different cultures from around the world are able to interact, they begin to meld, and the contours and individuality of each begin to fade.
- There may be a greater chance of disease spreading worldwide, as well as invasive species that could prove devastating in non-native ecosystems.
- There is little international regulation, an unfortunate fact that could have dire consequences for the safety of people and the environment.
- Large Western-driven organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank make it easy for a developing country to obtain a loan. However, a Western focus is often applied to a non-Western situation, resulting in failed progress.