

ASK Dr. G. Ographer



Our newspaper is lucky to have Dr. G. Ographer, a well known expert in the field of geography, as a guest writer. We welcome our readers to write in with their questions about geography, and Dr. G. answers as many letters as she can in this monthly column.

Dear Dr. G. Ographer,

I always thought geography was the study of mountains and landforms, but this year in my geography class we are learning mostly about people around the world. I don't understand. Please help.

Mixed Up in Mississippi —

Dear Mixed Up,

You are right in thinking that geographers study landforms, but we also study the people that live on the land. Cultural geography is the study of people in different places and their ways of life: their languages, housing, religion, the types of foods they eat, their forms of transportation, and so forth. I myself find cultural geography even more interesting than physical geography, but I am interested in both.

*I hope this helps clear things up for you,
Dr. G.*

Dear Dr. G. Ographer,

I am a student and my favorite school subject is geography. I was wondering if there are any jobs I could do with geography besides answer letters in a newspaper. Please write back and tell me.

Thank you,
Mark J.

Dear Mark,

I have good news for you. There are many jobs you could do if you decide to study geography. Geographers, what we call experts in the field, work with many other scientists to study the earth. Some work with our leaders in Washington, D.C. to help them decide where to build roads and dams. Others work to protect people from floods, storms, diseases, and other disasters. There are really too many things that geographers do for me to explain them all now. I am just happy to hear that you like your geography class and want to learn more about the subject!

*Best of luck in your studies,
Dr. G*

Dear Dr. G. Ographer,

I think I understand what geography is, but I don't understand how it is different from other fields. I know geographers study land and water, but so do other scientists. I know that geographers try to learn about people and cultures, but so do other fields. Could you please explain how geography is different from other sciences?

In Need of Information in Indiana

Dear In Need,

The question you ask is a good one. The answer, however, is not easy to give. I would have to say that geography often overlaps with other sciences, both physical and cultural. In fact it is common for geographers to work with other scientists on many projects. For example, geographers and geologists, who study rocks, might both be called upon for help with a mining project. In the case of a disease, geographers would work with doctors. Geography is a subject that covers a lot of ground. I know I did not answer your question fully, but I hope I have helped you understand a little more.

Keep asking; it's the best way to learn!

Dr. G.

Dear Dr. G. Ographer,

I am a parent of three school-age children. My son is studying geography this year and I am worried about his class. When I was in school, we had to study facts and take tests about them. I could say the names of all of the countries, mountain ranges, and rivers, but I have not seen my son learning the same kinds of things. Instead he tells me about topics like place, movement, and regions. Do you think my son has a bad geography teacher?

Signed,
Worried

Dear Worried,

It sounds like your son's teacher is very good. The topics you mentioned are three of the Five Themes of Geography. Geographers study the world in several ways: by looking at locations, places, ways humans interact with their environment, how people move and use products, and ways people and places can be looked at as groups – or regions. I'm sure if you ask your son, he will tell you more about the Five Themes of Geography.

Thank you for writing,

Dr. G