

# Geography Themes

Geography is the study of the earth and its features. It is also an important part of human history. Since the beginning of time, all civilizations have had to control their surroundings in order to survive. In addition, geography has played a vital role in many historical events. Like history itself, geography reflects several key themes. These themes help us to understand the different ways in which geography has helped shape the story of world history.

Relative vs. Absolute Location →

## Location

Location tells us where in the world a certain area is. Geographers describe location in two ways: *absolute* location and *relative* location. An area's absolute location is its point of latitude and longitude. Latitude is the distance in degrees north or south of the equator. Longitude is the degree, distance east or west of an imaginary vertical line that runs through Greenwich, England, called the prime meridian. An area's relative location describes where it is in terms of other areas.

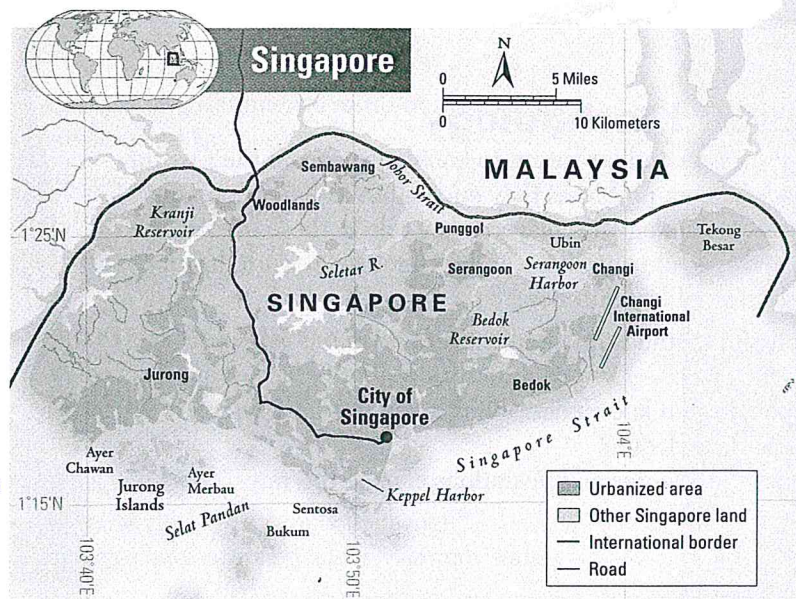
In absolute terms, the middle of Singapore lies at 1°20' north latitude and 103°50' east longitude. This information allows you to pinpoint Singapore on a map. In relative terms, Singapore is an island country on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula near where the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean meet. How might Singapore's location on the sea have helped it develop into an economic power?

## Human/Environment Interaction

Throughout history, humans have changed and have been changed by their environment. Because they live on an island, the people of Singapore have built a bridge in order to travel more easily to mainland Malaysia. In addition, Singapore residents have carved an inviting harbor out of parts of its coastline in order to accommodate the island's busy ocean traffic.

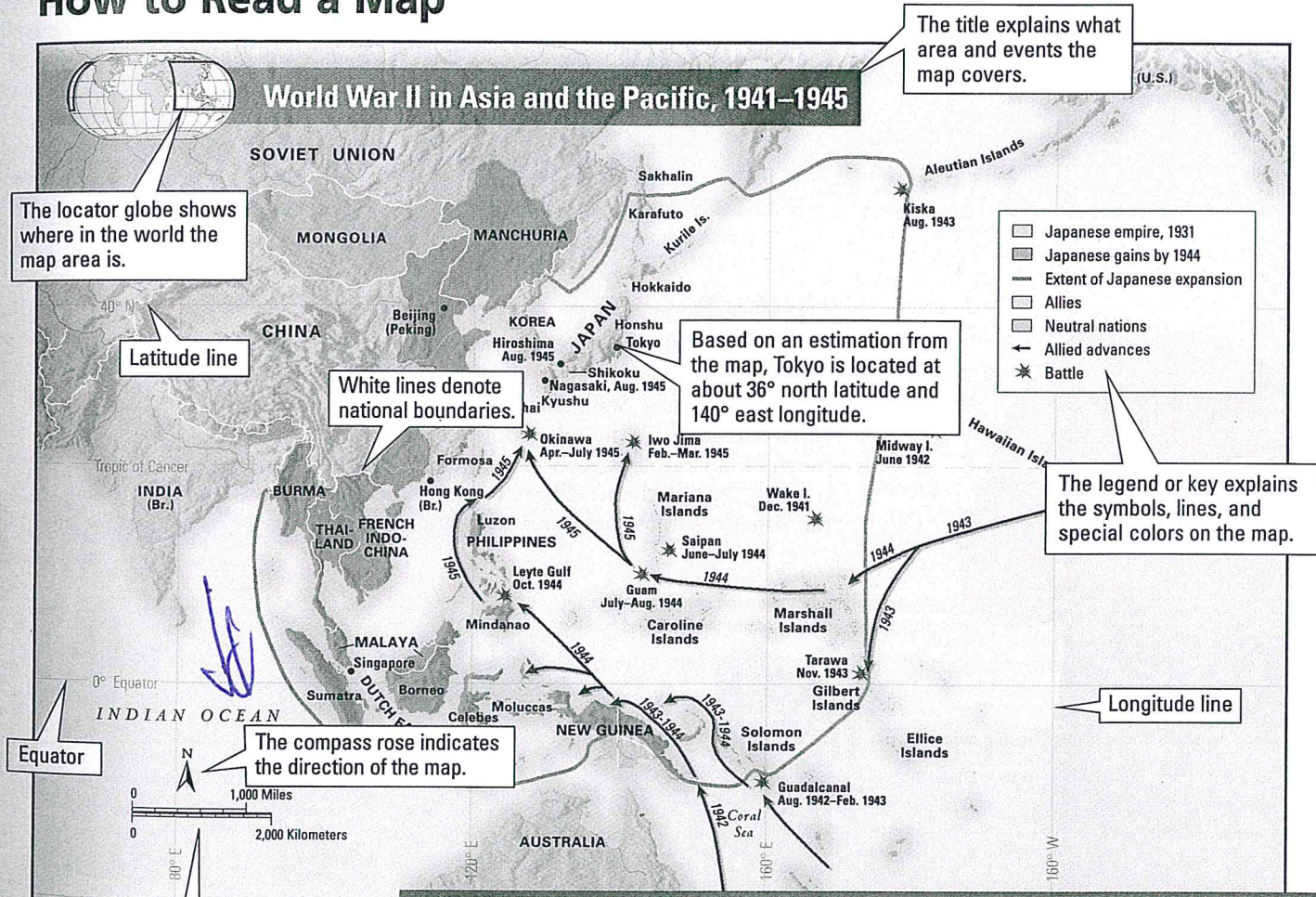
Singapore is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Many of its nearly three million citizens live in the capital city, Singapore. The country's population density is about 12,000 persons per square mile. In contrast, the United States has a population density of 71 persons per square mile. What environmental challenges does this situation pose?

World History: Patterns of Interaction (1999).



You are about to examine not only thousands of years of history, but nearly every region of the globe. To help you visualize the faraway places you read about, this book contains numerous maps. Many of these maps contain several layers of information that provide a better understanding of how and why events in history occurred. Below is a look at how to read a map in order to obtain all of the rich information it offers.

## How to Read a Map



### Common Geographic Terms

<b>equator</b>	the line of latitude midway between the North and South poles.
<b>latitude</b>	imaginary lines that circle the globe from east to west, measuring an area's distance north and south of the equator.
<b>longitude</b>	imaginary lines that circle the globe from north to south, measuring an area's distance east or west of the prime meridian.
<b>prime meridian</b>	the line of longitude at 0° that runs through Greenwich, England.
<b>hemisphere</b>	half the globe. The globe can be divided into Northern and Southern hemispheres (separated by the equator) or into Eastern and Western hemispheres (separated by the prime meridian).

## Section 3: Exploring Historical Evidence

### 3.3 Interpreting Maps

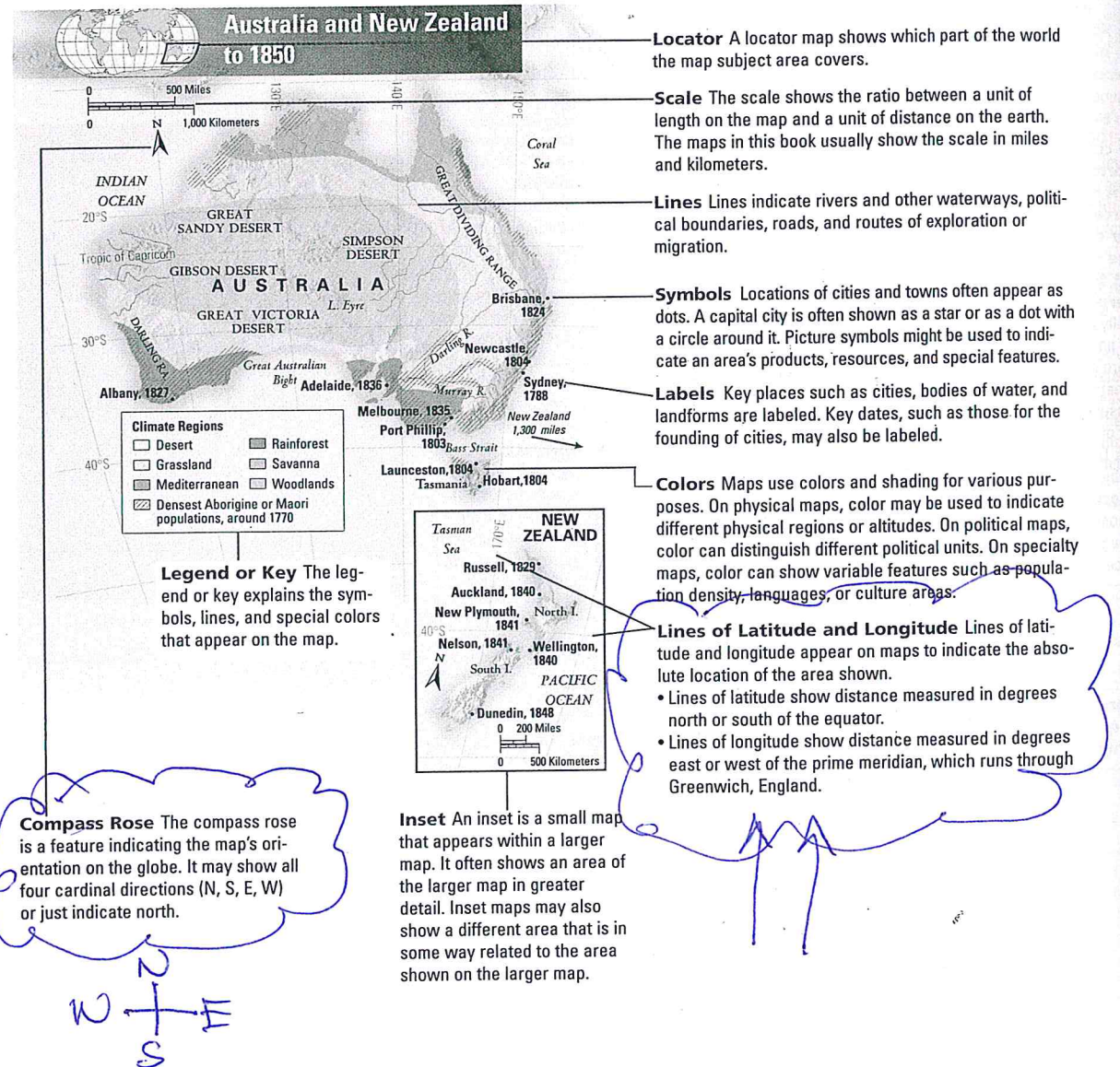
**Maps** are representations of features on the earth's surface. Historians use maps to locate historical events, to show how geography has influenced history, and to illustrate human interaction with the environment.

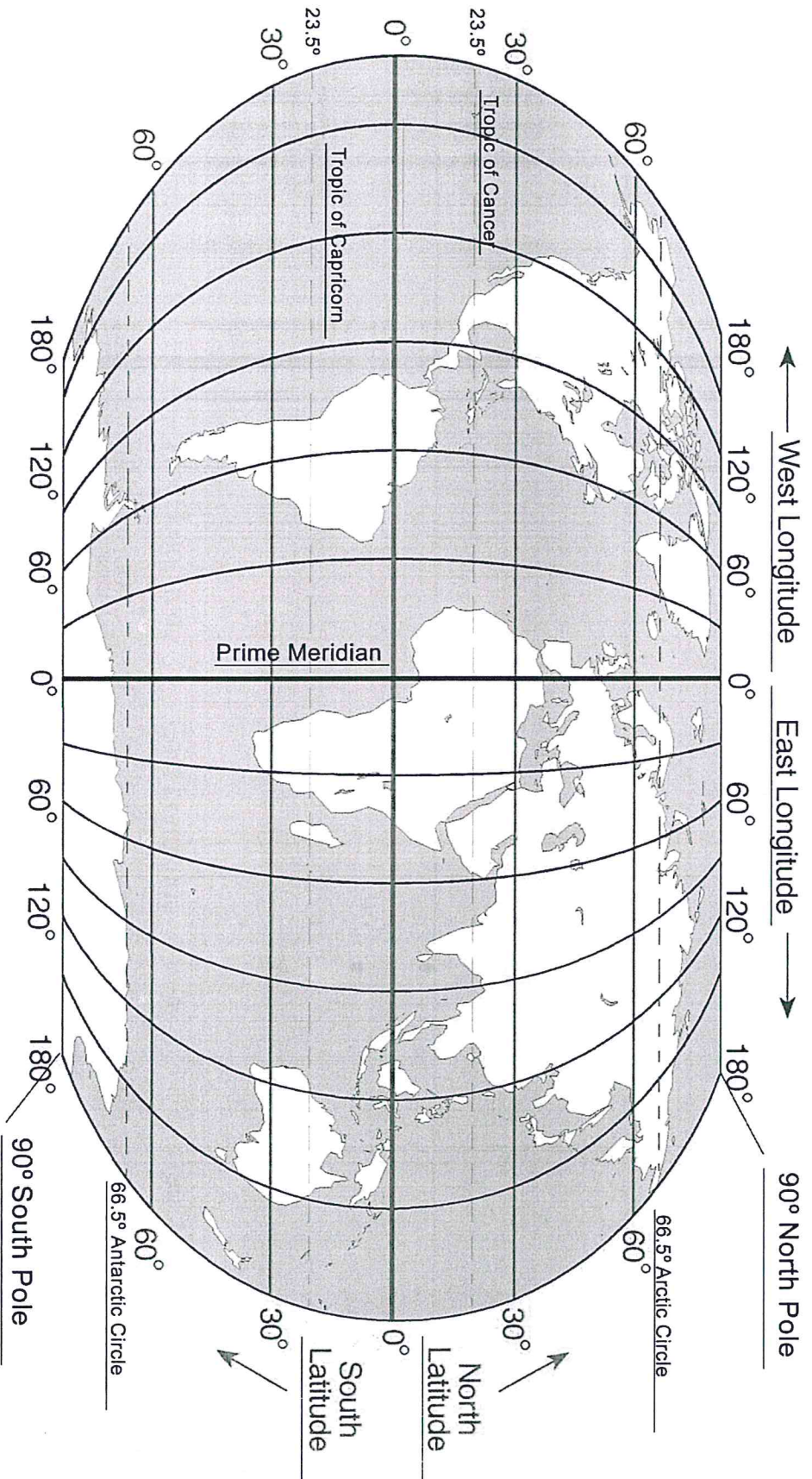
Different kinds of maps are used for specific purposes.

**Political maps** show political units, from countries, states, and provinces, to counties, districts, and towns. Each area is shaded a different color.

**Physical maps** show mountains, hills, plains, rivers, lakes, and oceans. They may use contour lines to indicate elevations on land and depths under water.

**Historical maps** illustrate such things as economic activity, political alliances, land claims, battles, population density, and changes over time.





Fill in the blanks with the following terms:

- |                  |                       |                    |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| - West Longitude | - Equator             | - North Pole       |
| - East Longitude | - Prime Meridian      | - South Pole       |
| - North Latitude | - Tropic of Cancer    | - Arctic Circle    |
| - South Latitude | - Tropic of Capricorn | - Antarctic Circle |