

Substitute Guide: The Four Regions of Texas

Grade: 4 **Subject:** Social Studies (Texas studies) **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension Social Studies

Learning goal (plain language)

Students learn that Texas has **four natural regions** — Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, and Coastal Plains — and that the **geography** of each region (its land, weather, and water) shapes **how people there live and work**. They read four short summaries, look at a simple map and a table, then **compare** two regions and write a short evidence-based explanation. **You do not need a Texas-geography background to run this.** Everything students need is printed in their packet, and you may read any part aloud. This is a Grade 4 packet, so directions are short and there is lots of room to write.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC Chapter 113 (Grade 4 Social Studies).

- **Primary (geography / Texas regions):** identifying the natural regions of Texas and describing how physical geography and climate shape settlement and ways of life in each region.
- **Skills (social studies skills):** using and interpreting a simple map and a table to locate regions and compare them with evidence.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted, and no specific section number is asserted. Please confirm the codes and wording against your official source. Prompts are kept neutral and factual.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm each student has a **pencil**. No calculators, computers, or textbooks are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (4–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no textbooks, no safety hazards.

Timing Suggested pacing (~45–60 min)

Segment	Time	What students do
Start — Find It on the Map	5 min	Q1–Q2 warm-up

Segment	Time	What students do
Build — Read the region profiles	10 min	Read the four profiles, word bank, map (Figure 1), Table 1
Apply — Read the map & table	20 min	Q3–Q8 (map, table, compare, cause/effect, fact/opinion, evaluate)
Explain — CER	10 min	Q9 claim/evidence/reasoning comparing two regions
Close — ACE	5 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional ~15 min	"Which region fits the job?"

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's work is a paper reading activity called *The Four Regions of Texas*. Texas has four natural regions: Mountains and Basins, the Great Plains, the North Central Plains, and the Coastal Plains. You will read four short summaries, look at a map and a table, and answer with a pencil. Work by yourself — no computers or books. Read the parts in order; if one question is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in full sentences when it asks you to explain. Everything you need is in the packet, so you do not need to know any outside facts. You may quietly read aloud to yourself. Put your name, class, and date at the top now. You have about 45 minutes; raise your hand if you need help with a word."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck comparing, point them to **Table 1** — the four regions sit side by side there.
- For cause and effect (Q6), point to a region's **profile**: the land/weather is the cause, the work is the effect.
- For "fact or opinion" (Q7), point to the **Word Bank**: an opinion says what someone feels or likes (like "best" or "prettier").
- Encourage the printed **sentence stems and starters** for Q6, the CER (Q9), and ACE.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "What does the packet say?" or "What is the land or weather like there?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of any passage or question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **Word Bank** (region, geography, landform, climate, plain, basin, ranching, port, fact, opinion are all defined for them).
- **Glossary tip**: if a word is hard, read its Word Bank meaning aloud and give a quick example ("a *basin* is a low, dry valley — like a big dip in the land between mountains").
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q9 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in short phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white, with roomy writing space and short directions for younger readers.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed**: calculator (no math required), phones, computers, textbooks or outside sources (everything needed is in the packet).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got and any words or questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for students who assume the four regions are the same (Q5/Q8) and for those who mix up the Great Plains and the North Central Plains (both have "Plains" in the name). A quick next-day sort of the four land/climate descriptions, plus reviewing the "geography → how people work" link for each region, would reinforce this well. The CER (Q9) responses show who can compare two regions and cite a profile, the map, or Table 1 as evidence.

G04_SOC_TexasRegions_01 — The Four Regions of Texas Substitute Guide

The Four Regions of Texas

Grade: 4 **Subject:** Social Studies (Texas studies) **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only Social Studies

Start Here

This is a **paper reading activity** about Texas. You will read four short region profiles, look at a map, and answer with a **pencil**. You do **not** need a computer or a book — **everything you need is in this packet**. Work by yourself. Write in full sentences when a question asks you to explain. If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. You may read the passages quietly aloud to yourself.

Start Find It on the Map 5 min

Warm up before you read. A **region** is a part of a place where the land and weather are much the same.

1 Look at the map in the Build section (Figure 1). Find the region marked **Mountains and Basins**. Write which corner of Texas it is in (for example, *far west* or *far east*).

2 People use the land around them to live and work. Name **one way** the land or weather might change how people work. (Guess in your own words.)

Build Read the Region Profiles 10 min

Mountains and Basins (written for this packet)

The Mountains and Basins region is in the **far west** corner of Texas. It has the tallest mountains in the state and wide, dry valleys called basins between them. It is the driest part of Texas and gets very little rain. Because water is hard to find, few people live here. Some people raise cattle on huge ranches, and there is some farming where water can be brought in. Texas's highest peak, Guadalupe Peak, is in this region.

Type: original region summary · Region: Mountains and Basins (far west)

Great Plains (written for this packet)

The Great Plains region covers the **northwest and west-central** part of Texas. Much of it is high, flat, open land, including the very flat top part called the High Plains, or Llano Estacado. The weather is dry, and there is lots of grass. This region is known for large cattle ranches and for growing crops like cotton and wheat. Wind and oil are also important, so you will see wind turbines and oil wells here.

Type: original region summary · Region: Great Plains (northwest)

North Central Plains (written for this packet)

The North Central Plains region sits in the **north-central** part of Texas, between the Great Plains to the west and the Coastal Plains to the east. It has rolling hills, prairies, and some woods. It gets more rain than the regions

farther west. People here raise cattle, grow crops, and drill for oil and gas. The large city of Fort Worth grew up in this region as a center for cattle and railroads.

Type: original region summary · Region: North Central Plains (north-central)

Coastal Plains (written for this packet)

The Coastal Plains region covers the **south and east** part of Texas, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. It is the largest region and where the most people live. The land is low and flat, and it gets the most rain, so the soil is good for farming. Along the warm coast there are busy ports, fishing, and oil found both on land and offshore. Many of Texas's biggest cities, like Houston and San Antonio, are in this region.

Type: original region summary · Region: Coastal Plains (south and east)

Word Bank

region

a part of a place where the land and weather are much the same.

geography

the land, water, and weather of a place.

landform

a natural shape of the land, like a mountain, hill, or plain.

climate

the usual weather of a place over time.

plain

a large area of flat or gently rolling land.

basin

a low, dry valley between mountains or hills.

ranching

raising cattle or other animals on a large area of land.

port

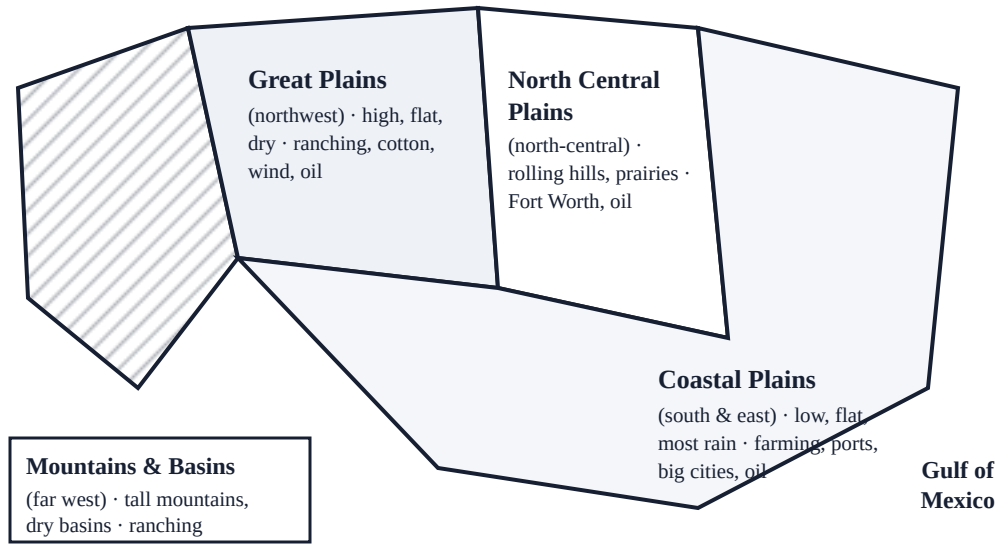
a place by the water where ships load and unload goods.

fact

something you can check and show is true.

opinion

what a person feels or likes; not proven true.



Not to scale — a simple drawing to show west-to-east order of the regions

Figure 1. A simple map of the four natural regions of Texas, from the Mountains and Basins in the far west, across the Great Plains and North Central Plains, to the Coastal Plains in the south and east by the Gulf of Mexico. The map is black on white with a pattern for the far-west region, so it reads clearly in grayscale. It is not to scale.

Table 1 — Comparing the regions (written for this packet)

Region	Where in Texas	Land & climate	Common work
Mountains and Basins	Far west	Tall mountains, dry basins; driest	Ranching; some farming with added water
Great Plains	Northwest	High, flat, dry; grassy	Cattle ranching; cotton and wheat; wind and oil
North Central Plains	North-central	Rolling hills, prairies; more rain	Ranching, crops, oil and gas; city of Fort Worth
Coastal Plains	South and east	Low, flat; most rain; warm coast	Farming, ports, fishing, oil; big cities

Type: original comparison table · Use it with the map to answer the questions.

Apply Read the Map & Table 20 min

3Map reading. Using Figure 1, which region is **farthest west**? Which region touches the **Gulf of Mexico**?

Farthest west: _____

Touches the Gulf: _____

4Table reading. Use Table 1 to fill in the blanks.

- a) The region with the tallest mountains is the _____ region.
- b) The region that gets the most rain is the _____ region.
- c) The region where the city of Fort Worth grew up is the _____ region.

5Compare. Pick **two** regions. Use the profiles and Table 1.

Write your two regions here: _____ and _____

One way the two regions are alike:

Two ways the two regions are different:

6Cause and effect. Pick **one** region. Explain how its **geography** (its land, weather, or water) affects **how people work** there. Write 2–3 sentences.

Sentence starter: "In the _____ region, the _____ means that people _____."

7Fact or opinion? Write **F** for a fact you can check in the packet, or **O** for an opinion (what someone feels or likes).

- _____ a) The Mountains and Basins region is the driest part of Texas.
- _____ b) The Coastal Plains is the best region in Texas.
- _____ c) The Great Plains region is known for large cattle ranches.
- _____ d) Mountains are prettier than plains.

8Check the claim. A student says: "*The land and weather are the same in all four regions of Texas.*" Does the packet support this?

- Yes — the packet says all four regions have the same land and weather.
- No — the packet shows dry mountains in the far west, dry flat plains, rolling hills, and a rainy low coast in the south and east.
- The packet does not talk about land or weather at all.

Explain your choice using one detail from a profile or Table 1:

Explain Claim–Evidence–Reasoning 10 min

Question 9. Pick two regions. How is the work people do different in those two regions, and why? Write a **claim** naming your two regions and how the work is different, give **two pieces of evidence** from the profiles, map, or Table 1, then explain your **reasoning** (how geography helps cause the difference).

Sentence stems you may use: "In _____ people mostly _____, but in _____ people mostly _____." · "One piece of evidence is... (from a profile / the map / Table 1)." · "A second piece of evidence is..." · "This happens because the land and weather are..."

Claim

Evidence (two pieces)

Reasoning

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

In your own words, tell a friend what a **region** is.

Connect

Name one place in this packet (the map, a profile, or Table 1) that shows the land changing how people work.

Extend

Which Texas region do **you** live in or live closest to? Name one way the land or weather there changes how people work or play.

Continue Early Finisher optional • ~15 min

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Which region fits the job? On the back of this page, match each worker to the region that fits best, and tell **why** using the packet: (1) a **rancher** who raises cattle on very dry, high, flat grassland, (2) a **dock worker** who loads ships at a busy port near warm ocean water, (3) a **mountain guide** who leads hikers up the tallest peak in Texas. For each one, name the region and give one reason from a profile, the map, or Table 1.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–9 and the ACE box are answered. The early-finisher matching is optional, but turn it in too if you did it.

G04_SOC_TexasRegions_01 — The Four Regions of Texas Student Packet



TEACHER ANSWER KEY FOLLOWS

Do not copy the pages after this divider for students.

Answer Key: The Four Regions of Texas

Grade: 4 **Subject:** Social Studies (Texas studies) **For teacher use only** Social Studies

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. Everything students need is in the packet, so answers should draw on the four region profiles, the map (Figure 1), and Table 1 only. Estimated grading time: ~4–6 min per packet.

Start Find It on the Map grade for effort · ~1 min

1 Where is the Mountains and Basins region?

Full credit for **far west** (west corner) of Texas. Any wording that places it in the west is fine. Warm-up graded for effort.

2 One way land or weather might change how people work.

Accept any reasonable idea in the student's own words: dry land makes farming hard, grassland is good for raising cattle, being near the ocean lets people fish or ship goods, more rain helps crops grow. More than one answer is defensible.

Apply Read the Map & Table ~2–3 min

3 Map reading — west and the Gulf.

Farthest **west: Mountains and Basins**. Touches the **Gulf of Mexico: Coastal Plains**. Both are read directly from Figure 1.

4 Table reading.

a) tallest mountains = **Mountains and Basins**. b) most rain = **Coastal Plains**. c) city of Fort Worth = **North Central Plains**. All read directly from Table 1 (and the profiles).

5 Compare — one likeness, two differences (student picks two regions).

Any two regions may be chosen. Judge the answer against the two the student named.

Alike (any one): both are regions of Texas; both use the land to make a living; most regions have some ranching and some oil; several are flat plains.

Different (any two): location (far west vs. northwest vs. north-central vs. south and east); land/climate (dry mountains and basins vs. high dry plains vs. rolling hills with more rain vs. low rainy coast); common work (ranching in the dry west vs. ports, fishing, and big cities on the coast).

Watch: a difference must contrast the two regions, not just restate one region's trait. Example full answer (Mountains and Basins vs. Coastal Plains): alike — both are Texas regions where people work the land; different — one is dry with mountains in the far west, the other is a rainy low coast in the south and east; one has few people and ranching, the other has big cities and ports.

6 Cause and effect — geography shapes the work.

Accept any one region with a correct geography → work link. **Models:**

- **Mountains and Basins:** it is very dry with mountains and basins, so few people live there and many raise cattle on huge ranches instead of farming.
- **Great Plains:** high, flat, grassy, and dry land is good for cattle ranching and for cotton and wheat, and the open windy land is used for wind power and oil.
- **North Central Plains:** rolling prairies with more rain support ranching and crops, and the region became a cattle and railroad center at Fort Worth.
- **Coastal Plains:** low, flat, rainy land with a warm coast supports farming, fishing, ports, and big cities, with oil found on land and offshore.

Full credit needs a geography cause **and** a matching effect on how people work. See rubric below.

7 Fact (F) / Opinion (O).

- a) **F** — checkable in the Mountains and Basins profile / Table 1.
- b) **O** — "best region" is a personal preference; cannot be proven.
- c) **F** — checkable in the Great Plains profile / Table 1.
- d) **O** — "prettier" is a personal feeling.

Fact = you can check it in the packet; opinion = what someone feels or likes.

8 Evaluate the claim "the land and weather are the same in all four regions."

Correct: B (No). The packet clearly shows different geography: a dry far-west region of mountains and basins, high dry plains, rolling hills with more rain, and a low, rainy coast in the south and east. Reject A (nothing says they are the same) and C (the packet discusses land and weather throughout). Explanation must cite one such detail from a profile or Table 1.

Explain CER (Q9) ~1–2 min

9 Compare how the work differs in two regions, and why.

Model answer (Mountains and Basins vs. Coastal Plains). Claim: In the Mountains and Basins region people mostly raise cattle on ranches, but in the Coastal Plains people also work at ports, fish, and live in big cities. Evidence: (1) The Mountains and Basins profile / Table 1 says the far west is very dry with mountains and basins, so few people live there and many ranch. (2) The Coastal Plains profile / Table 1 says the south and east is low, flat, and rainy with a warm coast, so it has farming, ports, fishing, and big cities. Reasoning: The land and weather are different, so people use whatever their region offers — dry grassland for cattle in the far west, and a rainy coast with a port and cities in the south and east.

Defensible alternates: any two regions may be chosen and earn full marks if the claim names both regions, two accurate pieces of evidence support it, and the reasoning connects the difference to geography.

CER scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Claim	Evidence	Reasoning
3	Names two regions and clearly states how the work differs.	Two accurate, relevant details from the profiles, map, and/or Table 1.	Correctly links the difference to geography (land, weather, or water).
2	Names two regions; difference mostly clear.	One solid detail, or two with a minor error.	Some correct linkage but incomplete or a small misconception.
1	Vague or names only one region.	Evidence weak, off-topic, or not from the packet.	Little or flawed reasoning; no clear link to geography.
0	No/incorrect claim.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any accurate plain-language definition (e.g., "a region is a part of a place where the land and weather are much the same").

Connect: the cited spot must actually show the land shaping work — e.g., the map note "dry basins · ranching," the Great Plains "ranching, cotton, wind, oil" note, or the Coastal Plains "farming, ports, big cities" note.

Extend: any reasonable region choice with a local land/weather effect linked to work or play (e.g., "the Coastal Plains is flat and rainy, so people farm," "warm Gulf water means people swim and fish"). More than one answer is defensible; grade the reason, not the region chosen.

Extra Early finisher — "Which region fits the job?"

Model matches: (1) rancher on dry, high, flat grassland → **Great Plains** (also defensible: Mountains and Basins, since it too is dry ranch land — accept with a sound reason). (2) dock worker loading ships at a warm-water port → **Coastal Plains** (the only region on the Gulf coast). (3) mountain guide on the tallest peak → **Mountains and Basins** (Guadalupe Peak, the highest in Texas). Grade the reason, not just the label.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **All regions are the same (Q5, Q8).** Students may assume Texas is one kind of land. Point to the clear land/climate and work differences in the profiles and Table 1 (dry far west vs. rainy coast).
- **Mixing up the two plains regions.** The **Great Plains** is the high, flat, dry northwest; the **North Central Plains** is the rolling, more-rainy north-central area with Fort Worth. "Plains" appears in both names — read the location column.
- **"Mountains and Basins" is all mountains.** It also has wide, dry basins (low valleys) between the mountains; it is the driest region, which is why few people live there.
- **Fact vs. opinion (Q7).** A statement using "best" or "prettier" is an opinion, not a fact — it cannot be checked in the packet.
- **Cause vs. effect (Q6).** The geography (land, weather, water) is the cause; how people work is the effect. Students sometimes name the job without naming the geography that led to it.
- **Not to scale.** The map is a simple drawing showing the west-to-east order, not exact sizes or shapes — grade the order and reasoning, not map precision.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students say the regions are "the same" (Q5/Q8), do a quick 3-minute sort of the four land/climate descriptions. If students confuse the two plains regions, re-anchor with the "Where in Texas" column of Table 1. If Q7 shows fact/opinion confusion, re-teach with the Word Bank and a couple of quick examples. If Q6 or the CER (Q9) reasoning is thin, model aloud the "geography → work" link for one region. The highest-value idea to revisit is that **the land and weather of each Texas region shape how people there live and work.**

G04_SOC_TexasRegions_01 — The Four Regions of Texas Teacher Answer Key