

Answer Key: Comparing Two World Regions

Course: World Geography **Grades:** 9–12 **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 two profiles and Figure 1 only. Items marked **[BLOCK]** apply only to the ~90-minute version. Estimated grading time: ~6–8 min per packet.

Start Observe a Region grade for effort · ~2 min

1 Notice + predict from the two short descriptions.

Full credit for any reasonable notice + prediction. **Notice** examples: "Region 1 is dry/desert and Region 2 is wet/rainforest," "one gets almost no rain, the other gets heavy rain," "one is hot and dry, the other is hot and wet." **Predict** examples: "people in the desert would live near water," "the rainforest people would travel by river," "farming and jobs would look different." Accept any on-topic prediction — warm-up graded for effort.

2 Why climate and landforms affect where people live.

Accept any reasonable idea in the student's own words: people need water and livable temperatures; deserts push people toward water; rivers and flat land attract settlement; harsh climate or hard terrain keeps people away. More than one answer is defensible.

Build Read the Profiles ~1 min

3 Fill in the two missing cells of Figure 1.

Yearly rainfall — Sahara: very low (a few centimeters).

Climate — Amazon Basin: hot and very wet (tropical).

Accept close paraphrases ("almost no rain"; "hot and rainy / humid tropical").

Apply Analyze the Region ~3–4 min

4 Read the figure.

a) **Amazon Basin** (very high / often over 2 m).

b) **Amazon Basin** (people cluster along the rivers). Note: Sahara settlement also follows some rivers and oases, but the "settle mainly along rivers" pattern is the Amazon; accept Amazon.

c) Any activity listed for the Sahara but not the Amazon: **herding, oasis farming, trade** (trade routes), or **oil/gas/mineral extraction**. (Mining and farming appear for both, so those are not accepted here.)

5 Compare — similarities and differences (physical + human).

Similarity — physical: both are hot regions; both have a defining water feature that organizes life (scarce water / abundant river water). **Similarity — human:** in both, people cluster near water and much of the interior is thinly settled; both have farming and resource extraction.

Difference — physical: arid desert vs. wet tropical rainforest; sand/rock/gravel plains vs. rainforest lowland with a huge river system; very low vs. very high rainfall. **Difference — human:** Sahara people cluster at oases/scattered water while Amazon people cluster along rivers used as highways; economies differ (herding + oil/gas vs. fishing/river transport + logging). Any one valid physical point and one valid human point per column earn credit.

6 How physical features shape human activity (one region).

Model (Sahara): "The Sahara's hot, extremely dry climate (physical feature) means water is scarce, so people settle near oases and rivers (where they live) and raise camels and goats that survive on little vegetation (economic activity)." **Model (Amazon):** "The Amazon's large river system (physical feature) gives people natural travel routes, so they settle along the rivers and make a living by fishing and river transport." Award credit for a valid physical feature, a plausible link to settlement, and a named economic activity. See rubric below.

7 Cause and effect across regions — water shapes both, oppositely.

Sahara: water is scarce, so people *cluster in a few livable spots near water (oases, wells, rivers) and leave the dry interior nearly empty.* **Amazon:** water is abundant in the rivers, so people *settle along the rivers and use them for transport, trade, and fishing.* Must use one detail from each profile. The key point: in one region water is a limit people gather around; in the other, water (as rivers) is a resource and highway people follow.

8 Fact (F) / Interpretation (I) / Opinion (O).

a) **F** — checkable in the profiles/figure (Sahara dry, Amazon wet).

b) **I** — a reasoned "probably...because" conclusion linking scarce water to settlement.

c) **O** — a personal judgment ("far more beautiful"); cannot be proven.

d) **F** — checkable in Profile B (rivers used for transport and fishing).

Fact = checkable; interpretation = reasoned from facts (often "probably/because"); opinion = personal preference or aesthetic judgment.

9 Evaluate the claim "climate is the only thing that matters."

Correct: B (No). The profiles show that landforms and rivers also shape human life — Amazon rivers serve as transport routes and settlement lines, and Sahara oases, wells, and mountains shape where people can live. Climate matters, but not alone. Reject A (the profiles never say climate is the only factor) and C (rivers and landforms are described in detail). Explanation must cite one such detail.

10 **[BLOCK]** Push and pull factors (Profile C).

Sahara — push: extreme dryness / scarce water in the deep interior. **Sahara — pull:** oases and river water.

Amazon — push: dense forest / flooding in some interior areas. **Amazon — pull:** rivers (transport, fishing) and jobs in growing cities. A correct answer names one push and one pull for either region and connects them to where people live (people avoid the pushed-away areas and cluster where pull factors are). Accept any accurate pairing from Profile C.

Explain CER (Q11) ~2–3 min

11 Which region's physical geography limits settlement more? (comparison)

Open argument — no single correct region. A strong response names one region, backs it with two accurate pieces of evidence, and reasons clearly.

Sample (Sahara): "The Sahara's physical geography places the greater limit. Evidence: Figure 1 shows very low rainfall (a few cm) and Profile A says water is the scarcest resource, so most of the interior is nearly empty. Reasoning: because people cannot survive without water, settlement is squeezed into a few oases and river edges, a tighter limit than the Amazon's."

Sample (Amazon): could argue dense forest, heavy rainfall, and flooding make much of the interior hard to settle, so people are confined to the river corridors (Profile B, Figure 1). Either region is defensible.

Defensible alternates: either region is acceptable if supported by two on-topic pieces of evidence and sound reasoning. Do not reward a claim built on a human factor alone (e.g., "there are more jobs") with no physical-geography evidence, or a claim with no packet evidence.

[BLOCK] extended writing: full block credit requires (1) a **land-use analysis** naming one main economic activity from each region and tying it to that region's physical geography, and (2) a genuine **counter-consideration** — naming why the other region could be judged more limiting — followed by a reasoned defense or revision of the original claim.

CER scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Claim	Evidence	Reasoning
3	Names one region (Sahara or Amazon) as more limiting to settlement, clearly stated.	Two accurate, relevant pieces from the profiles or Figure 1.	Explains why the physical geography limits settlement; geographically sound and on-topic. (Block: adds a land-use analysis + a fair counter-consideration.)
2	Region named, mostly clear.	One solid piece, or two with a minor error.	Some correct linkage but incomplete or a small misconception.
1	Vague, or argues from a human factor with no physical evidence.	Evidence weak, off-topic, or not from the packet.	Little or flawed reasoning; no clear tie between evidence and claim.
0	No/incorrect claim.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any accurate plain-language explanation (e.g., "comparing two regions means looking at their physical geography — climate and landforms — and their human geography — where people live and work — to see how they are alike and different").

Connect: the cited items must actually be a physical feature and a human activity shaped by it — e.g., physical: Amazon's rivers or Sahara's arid climate; human: river transport/fishing, or clustering at oases and herding. Grade whether the pairing is correctly labeled.

Extend: any reasonable local or known region with a sensible physical-to-human link (e.g., a coast → fishing/ports; plains → farming; mountains → tourism/mining). More than one answer is defensible; grade the reasoning.

Continue Early finisher (optional)

EF Design a settlement, and why.

Accept any defensible location tied to a physical feature and a detail: e.g., **Sahara** → **near an oasis or along a river** (for water, farming, and trade); **Amazon** → **along a river** (for transport, fishing, and trade). Grade the reasoning and the use of a profile/figure detail, not the specific spot chosen.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Physical vs. human geography.** Climate, landforms, rainfall, and rivers are physical; where people settle and how they earn a living are human. Q5, Q6, and the ACE Connect target this; watch for students labeling an economic activity as a "physical" feature.
- **"Climate is the only factor" thinking (Q9).** Landforms and rivers also shape settlement and work. Students often over-credit climate; the profiles show rivers, oases, and terrain matter too.
- **Assuming "low rainfall = no people" or "rainforest = empty."** Both regions have low average density but concentrated settlement near water; people are not absent, they are clustered. Q7 targets this.
- **Fact vs. interpretation vs. opinion (Q8).** A "probably...because" statement is an interpretation; a preference like "more beautiful to live" is an opinion, not a fact.
- **Treating the figures as exact data.** Rainfall values ("a few cm," "over 2 m") are rounded, general figures reflecting well-documented patterns, not precise measurements for every spot in each region.
- **Non-partisan framing.** Keep discussion on what the evidence shows about the two regions; avoid ranking one place as "better," and treat land-use debates neutrally.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students confuse physical with human geography (Q5, Q6, Q11), do a quick "physical or human?" sort with a few statements from the profiles. If Q8 reveals fact/interpretation/opinion confusion, re-anchor with the Word Bank definitions and a few examples. If the CER (Q11) evidence is thin, model naming a specific profile detail or a cell from Figure 1 and tying it to the chosen region. The highest-value idea to revisit is that a region's physical geography (climate and landforms) shapes its human geography (settlement and economy) — and that both regions show people clustering where water makes life possible, though for opposite reasons.

HS_WGEO_RegionsCompare_01 — Comparing Two World Regions Teacher Answer Key