

Comparing Two World Regions

Course: World Geography **Grades:** 9–12 **Time:** ~50 min standard · ~90 min block **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only Social Studies

Start Here

This is a **paper geography investigation**. You will compare **two real world regions** — the **Sahara region of North Africa** and the **Amazon Basin of South America** — using both **physical geography** (climate and landforms) and **human geography** (where and how people live and work). You will read two short profiles written for this packet, study a comparison figure, and answer questions using a pencil. You do **not** need a computer, a textbook, or the internet — **everything you need is printed in this packet**. Work by yourself and do your best thinking. Write in complete sentences where you are asked to explain. If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. Reading the passages quietly aloud to yourself is allowed and encouraged. Keep your answers **non-partisan and grounded in the evidence** — describe what the profiles and figure show, not which place you personally prefer.

Standard (~50 min): do Profiles A–B and Questions 1–10, then the CER in Question 11. **Block (~90 min):** also read **Profile C** and complete the block add-ons marked **[BLOCK]**, including the extended writing in Question 11.

Start Observe a Region 5 min

A **region** is an area of the world that shares one or more common features — such as a climate, a landform, or a way of life. Warm up before you read.

1Two short descriptions are printed below. Read them, then answer.

Region 1: "A vast, hot desert of sand, rock, and gravel where rain almost never falls. Days are scorching, nights can be cold, and most settlement clusters near scarce water."

Region 2: "A hot, wet lowland covered by the world's largest rainforest, drained by a giant river system, where thick vegetation and heavy rainfall shape daily life."

Type: original descriptions written for this packet · Focus: two contrasting physical environments.

Notice: Write **one thing you notice** about how the two regions differ in **climate** (how wet or dry, hot or cool).

Predict: Based only on these descriptions, **predict one way** daily life or work might differ between the two places.

2Before reading the profiles, why do you think a region's **climate and landforms** might affect **where people choose to live**? Give **one reason** in your own words.

Build Read the Profiles 10–15 min

Profile A — The Sahara region, North Africa (written for this packet)

Physical geography (climate & landforms). The Sahara is one of the largest hot deserts on Earth, stretching across much of North Africa. Its climate is **hot and extremely dry**: many areas receive only a few centimeters of

rain in a whole year, and some spots may go years with almost none. Daytime temperatures are very high, while clear desert skies let heat escape at night, so nights can turn surprisingly cold. The land is a mix of shifting sand dunes, bare rock, gravel plains, and scattered mountains. Water is the scarcest resource of all.

Population & settlement. Because water is so limited, population density across most of the Sahara is **very low**, and people **cluster where water is available** — around **oases**, along rivers such as the Nile at its edges, and near wells. Large stretches of the interior are nearly empty of permanent settlement.

Main economic activities. Traditional livelihoods include **pastoral herding** (raising camels, goats, and sheep that can survive on sparse vegetation) and **oasis farming** of hardy crops like dates where water allows. **Trade routes** have long crossed the desert, and today parts of the region also produce **oil, natural gas, and minerals** and draw some desert tourism.

Type: original explanatory profile · Focus: physical and human geography of the Sahara region · Facts are well-established and stated in general terms.

Profile B — The Amazon Basin, South America (written for this packet)

Physical geography (climate & landforms). The Amazon Basin is a huge lowland in northern South America, drained by the **Amazon River** and its many tributaries — one of the largest river systems in the world by volume of water. Its climate is **hot and very wet** (tropical), with heavy rainfall spread through much of the year and high humidity. This warm, wet climate supports the world's **largest tropical rainforest**, a dense cover of tall trees and thick vegetation over mostly flat terrain.

Population & settlement. Much of the deep rainforest has a **low population density**, but people commonly **settle along the rivers**, which serve as natural highways for travel and trade. Some large cities have grown at key points on the river system, while **Indigenous communities** have lived throughout the basin for a very long time.

Main economic activities. Activities include **fishing** and **river transport**, gathering forest products, small-scale and commercial **farming, logging, and mining**. The rainforest is also globally important for biodiversity and for storing carbon, which shapes debates about how the land should be used.

Type: original explanatory profile · Focus: physical and human geography of the Amazon Basin · Facts are well-established and stated in general terms.

Profile C — Land-use & push/pull factors [BLOCK]

Read Profile C only if you are doing the ~90-minute **block** version. This is an **original summary** written for this packet. In geography, a **push factor** is a condition that drives people *away* from a place, and a **pull factor** draws people *toward* a place. In the **Sahara**, extreme dryness and scarce water **push** permanent settlement away from the deep interior, while oases and river water **pull** people toward a few livable spots. In the **Amazon Basin**, dense forest and flooding can **push** settlement away from some interior areas, while rivers (for transport and fishing) and jobs in growing cities **pull** people toward the waterways. Land use also differs: the Sahara supports mostly herding, oasis farming, and resource extraction; the Amazon supports fishing, farming, logging, and mining within or around the forest.

Type: original summary · Focus: push/pull factors and land use in the two regions.

Word Bank

region

an area that shares one or more common features, such as climate or landforms.

physical geography

the natural features of a place: climate, landforms, water, and vegetation.

- human geography
how people live in a place: where they settle and how they work.
- climate
the usual pattern of temperature and precipitation in a place over many years.
- landform
a natural feature of the land's surface, such as a dune, plain, mountain, or river valley.
- population density
how many people live in a given area of land.
- settlement
a place where people live; also the pattern of where people choose to live.
- oasis
a fertile spot in a desert where water is available at or near the surface.
- arid
very dry; receiving little precipitation.
- tropical
hot and typically wet; found near the Equator.
- push factor
a condition that drives people away from a place.
- pull factor
a condition that draws people toward a place.
- fact
a statement that can be checked and shown true or false.
- interpretation
an explanation of what evidence means; reasoned from facts.
- opinion
a personal belief or preference; not proven by evidence.

Two Regions Compared: Sahara vs. Amazon Basin

Indicator	Sahara region (N. Africa)	Amazon Basin (S. America)
Climate	Hot and extremely dry (arid)	Hot and very wet (tropical)
Main landform	Desert: sand, rock, gravel plains	Rainforest lowland, large river system
Yearly rainfall	Very low (a few cm)	Very high (often over 2 m)
Where people settle	Sparse; cluster at oases & rivers	Thin in deep forest; cluster along rivers
Main economic activities	Herding, oasis farming, trade, oil/gas/minerals	Fishing, river transport, farming, logging, mining

Figure 1. A comparison table of the Sahara region and the Amazon Basin across five geographic indicators (climate, landform, rainfall, settlement, and economy). All text is black on white so the figure reads clearly in grayscale.

3Using **Figure 1**, fill in the two missing cells.

Yearly rainfall — Sahara: _____

Apply Analyze the Region 20–25 min

4Read the figure. Use Figure 1 to answer.

- a) Which region has the **higher yearly rainfall**? _____
- b) In which region do people mainly settle **along rivers**? _____
- c) Name **one economic activity** listed for the **Sahara** that is *not* listed for the Amazon: _____

5Compare — **similarities and differences**. Using the profiles and figure, complete the chart with a **physical** point and a **human** point in each column.

One way the regions are similar	One way the regions are different
Physical: _____	Physical: _____
_____	_____
Human: _____	Human: _____
_____	_____

Hint: a *similarity* might be that people in both regions cluster near water; a *difference* might be dry desert vs. wet rainforest.

6How do **physical features shape human activity**? In 2–3 sentences, pick **one** region and trace a cause-and-effect chain: name a **physical feature** (climate or landform), explain how it affects **where people live**, and name one **economic activity** it helps make possible.

7Cause and effect across regions. Water shapes settlement in **both** regions, but in **opposite** ways. Explain: in the **Sahara**, water is scarce, so people ____; in the **Amazon**, water is abundant in the rivers, so people _____. Use one detail from each profile.

8Fact, interpretation, or opinion? Write **F** (fact you can check in the packet), **I** (interpretation reasoned from facts), or **O** (opinion / personal belief).

- _____ a) The Sahara receives very little rain, while the Amazon Basin receives a great deal.
- _____ b) Because water is so scarce in the Sahara, most people probably live near oases or rivers.
- _____ c) The Amazon rainforest is a far more beautiful place to live than the desert.
- _____ d) Rivers in the Amazon Basin are used for transport and fishing.

9Evaluate a claim using the packet. A student claims: "*Climate is the only thing that matters for how people live in a region — landforms and rivers make no difference.*" Do the profiles support this claim?

- Yes — the profiles say climate is the only factor that shapes human life.
- No — the profiles show that **landforms and rivers also matter** (for example, Amazon rivers serve as transport routes and Sahara oases and mountains shape settlement), not climate alone.
- The profiles never mention rivers or landforms at all.

Explain your choice using one detail from a profile:

10[BLOCK] Push and pull factors. Skip this if you are doing the standard version. Using **Profile C**, name **one push factor** and **one pull factor** for settlement in **either** region, then explain in one sentence how these factors help explain where people live there.

Explain Claim–Evidence–Reasoning 10–20 min

Question 11 — Build an evidence-based comparison.

Which region's physical geography places the greater limit on where people can settle — the Sahara or the Amazon Basin? Write a **claim** that names one region, support it with **two pieces of evidence** from the profiles or figure, then explain your **reasoning**. There is no single "right" region — your job is to argue from the evidence.

Sentence stems you may use: "The region whose physical geography places the greater limit on settlement is _____ because..." · "One piece of evidence is... (from Profile A / B / C or Figure 1)." · "A second piece of evidence is..." · "This evidence supports my claim because..."

Claim

Evidence (two pieces)

Reasoning

[BLOCK] Extended writing — add a land-use analysis and a counter-consideration:

If you are doing the ~90-minute block, extend your argument on the lines below. (1) Add a **land-use analysis**: name one main economic activity from each region and explain how the physical geography makes that activity possible. (2) Add a **counter-consideration**: name one reason someone might argue the *other* region's physical geography limits settlement more, then explain why you still hold your claim — or how your claim changes.

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

In your own words, explain what it means to **compare two regions** using physical and human geography, as if teaching a friend who missed today.

Connect

Point to one line in a profile or one cell in Figure 1 that shows a **physical feature**, and one that shows a **human activity** shaped by it. Name both.

Extend

Name one region near where you live (or another region you know) and give one way its physical geography shapes how people there live or work.

Continue Early Finisher optional · ~15 min

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Design a settlement. On the back of this page, pick **one** region. Imagine you must choose where to build a new town. Using only the profiles and Figure 1, name **where in that region you would locate it and why** — point to a physical feature (such as an oasis, a river, or a mountain edge) and explain how it would support the people who live there. Support your choice with one detail from the packet.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class period, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–11 and the ACE box are answered (skip the items marked [BLOCK] if you did the standard ~50-minute version). The early-finisher task is optional but turn it in too if you did it.

HS_WGEO_RegionsCompare_01 — Comparing Two World Regions Student Packet