

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