

UNIT 1

Introduction to Our World

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Chapter 1

The Social Sciences and Decision Making

Chapter Preview

Terms

history, philosopher, geography, environment, absolute location, latitude, longitude, relative location, human geography, physical geography, political science, civic life, personal life, politics, government, economics, scarcity, trade, specialization, domestic, globalization, decision, issue, options, consequences, values

Background: Locations from Europe, Australia, and the Americas are the focus of this study.



In each school year you probably had a class called Social Studies. The class may have taught you about historical figures such as Paul Revere, Frederick Douglass, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and Cesar Chavez. You may have studied important places like Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the Grand Canyon, or New York City and events like the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving, the American Revolution, World War II, and the civil rights movement. All of these and much more were part of this class called Social Studies.

Have you ever really asked yourself: What is social studies? Social studies is the integration of the social sciences, which include history, geography, political science, and economics. The purpose of social studies is to prepare people like yourself to be good citizens. Being a good citizen means having the knowledge and skills to make informed and reasoned decisions. Social studies encourages you to think about how people made decisions, why they made those decisions, and what resulted from those decisions. To understand events and problems in today's world, and to find solutions to these problems, citizens like you need information. Citizens also need to learn how to use information to make the best possible decisions. To be the best citizen, you will benefit from understanding more about the diverse world in which you live.

“

Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature has so joined together, let no man put asunder.

-John F. Kennedy

Background: Images in this collage show some of the world's diversity.

Section 1

What Is History?

Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

- ▶ why people study the past;
- ▶ the role of decision making in determining history;
- ▶ terms: **history**, **philosopher**.

History is who we are and why we are the way we are.

- David McCullough,
American historian

History is the story of the successes and failures from the past that shaped our world today. We study history to learn about the decisions people have made across time that shaped who we are today. If we understand our past, we can make better decisions today, and that will move us into the future in a positive way.

Studying history means learning about decisions that people have made over time. The **philosopher** George Santayana wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” A part of history is learning about decisions people have made across time, and how those decisions have affected events, issues, and movements. That includes learning about decisions that failed (so we do not repeat those mistakes today) and decisions that made life better for their country and the world. In other words, we study history in the hope that we do not repeat the mistakes of our ancestors.

Many students have learned about the history of the United States in elementary school. This textbook has information about the history of other countries. Learning the history of other countries provides information for decision making. To be successful living among the different people of the world, people need good information so they can make good decisions.



Above: Images on postage stamps are one way for a country to honor important people in its history.

In this textbook are short histories of some countries of Europe. For instance, the history of Great Britain is closely related to the history of the United States of America. The founders of the United States were British! The people of Great Britain spread their language and culture across much of the globe. But why did they do it? What effects did these activities have? What evidence of their actions is present in our world today? The English language is spoken in large areas of North and South America, but Spanish is more dominant in the South. Studying history can help a citizen understand the background of people, which helps to explain their actions and thinking. This book has a short history of Australia—a place that is both a continent and a country. It is far from the United States, and yet it is one of the United States' closest allies. How could a country so far from the United States be such a good friend? Can this friendship last into the future? These are the types of questions a good student of history will explore.

As you study history, you will learn about institutions (like governments), values, and beliefs of people in the past. You will also learn skills that will help you understand the past and conduct historical inquiry or investigations. Finally, you will gain a better understanding of how important historical events have shaped the modern world in which you live.

Reviewing the Section

1. Which of the social sciences focuses on the events and people from the past?
2. How can studying history help people make better decisions?
3. Describe a time when you learned something from another person's success or failure that helped you make a better decision.

“

History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.

- Napoleon Bonaparte,
French leader

“

History shows that there are no invincible armies.

- Joseph Stalin, leader of
the Soviet Union



Above: A nation's flag is a symbol of the country, its people, and its values.

Section 2

What Is Geography?


 Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

- ▶ why people study geography;
- ▶ the five themes of geography;
- ▶ the difference between absolute and relative location;
- ▶ characteristics that are part of human geography;
- ▶ the relationship between people and their environment;
- ▶ terms: **geography, environment, absolute location, latitude, longitude, relative location, human geography, physical geography.**

The Study of Geography

The study of **geography** is the study of our surroundings—the physical features that describe places on Earth, and the human geography that examines how people make decisions about how to adapt to their **environment** (surroundings). The study of geography may be described by five themes. These themes help us understand our world. The themes are location, place, human/environment interaction, movement, and regions.

The study of geography is about more than just memorizing places on a map. It's about understanding the complexity of our world, appreciating the diversity of cultures that exists across continents. And in the end, it's about using all that knowledge to help bridge divides and bring people together.

- Barack Obama,
president of the
United States

What makes a nation in the beginning is a good piece of geography.

- Robert Frost,
American poet

Theme 1 – Location: Position on Earth’s Surface

Location describes where a place is on Earth. It can be described in two different ways: absolute location and relative location. **Absolute location** uses latitude and longitude to find the exact location of a place on Earth. **Latitude** is an imaginary line that measures a location’s distance north or south of the Equator. **Longitude** is an imaginary line that measures a location’s distance east or west of the prime meridian. For example, the coordinates of Atlanta, Georgia, are latitude 33.7490° North, longitude 84.3880° West.

On the other hand, **relative location** is a location described by where it is in relation, or compared, to somewhere else. For example, Atlanta, Georgia, is roughly 100 miles north of Macon, Georgia. Another example could be that Georgia is north of Florida and east of Alabama.

Theme 2 – Place: Physical and Human Characteristics

All places have physical and human characteristics that make them unique. Places can be defined by **human geography** characteristics that include languages spoken, customs practiced, and belief systems. For example, in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, English is the dominant language. Other languages are spoken, but English is by far the most common. Even with the common language of English, however, there is great diversity in the way people live in these countries. They each have their own customs, traditions, and even accents, which make their place in the English-speaking world unique.

Places can also be described by **physical geography** characteristics that include landforms, climate, vegetation, and other natural characteristics. When learning about a place, it is important to understand the relationship between culture and location. The mountainous region of southern Germany, for instance, was isolated from other parts of the country. In this region, known as Bavaria, the types of buildings, foods, clothing, and even the German accents are different from the rest of the country.



Top: Indigenous people such as these Yaminawá from Brazil work to interact with the outside world while protecting their culture and environment. **Above:** The people living in the Bavarian region around the church of Maria Gern in the German Alps have an accent and traditions distinct from others in Germany.

Theme 3 – Human/Environment Interaction: Shaping the Landscape

This theme describes how people make decisions about interacting with their environment and how the environment responds. For example,



sugarcane is one of the most suitable crops for the climate and soil of the island nation of Cuba. This crop has been important to the history of the country. People have cleared many acres of forest, leveled the ground, and added irrigation to help grow healthy crops. However, the island has frequent droughts (times with little rainfall), which damage or kill sugarcane. In times of drought, people must make decisions as to whether to water the crops or store the water to supply the drinking water needs of the people.

In this short example, we see humans making choices about how to live and interact with the environment. There is an example of humans adapting the landscape to fit their needs, but there are also consequences. Clearing land can cause erosion that washes away fertile soil. Animals and plants in a region can suffer from loss of habitat. There can be short-term and long-term consequences to decisions humans make about how they choose to live in their environment.

Theme 4 – Movement: People and Ideas Travel

Movement is when people, goods, and ideas travel from one location to another. An example is when the European countries began to explore other parts of the world, creating colonies and spreading Christianity as well as their languages and culture. Inventions like the airplane have allowed people and goods to be shipped among nations quickly in the 21st century. The invention of the Internet has allowed ideas to spread through social media websites because people are able to communicate easily with others from all around the world.



Top: Cuban farmers like this one have planted sugarcane in the Valle de Viñales for centuries. **Above:** Toronto Pearson International Airport is Canada's busiest airport with over 47 million passengers per year.

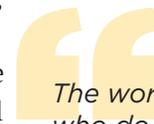
The movement of people can happen quickly in today's world. However, travel in the past was a bit slower. The first settlers from Great Britain who moved to Australia in 1788 were on their ships for 109 *days*. Today the journey from London, England, to Sydney, Australia, by commercial airliner takes only around 23 *hours*. The trip can still be made by ship, and it takes less than a month! Goods as well as people are moved freely around the world in the 21st century.

Theme 5 – Regions: How They Form and Change

Regions are areas with distinctive human and/or physical characteristics. In other words, a region is any unit of space that is united by the presence of some characteristic. For example, the Amazon region of Brazil is home to many forest-dwelling native people. These people have maintained much of their traditional way of life, culture, and language in Brazil's rain forests. Although Brazil is a modern country in many ways, there are regions where people live much as their ancestors did many generations ago.

It is important to remember that regions are not the same as countries. Regions usually involve an area that includes partial or whole countries, or can be found across more than one country.

In this book, you will learn about the geographic decisions people have made across time and how these decisions have shaped the world you live in today. You will learn where people, places, and resources are located and why they are there. You will also explore the relationship between humans and the environment. As you study world cultures and cultural diversity, you will learn how humans create, learn, share, and adapt. You will also learn how culture has shaped our lives and society, as well as the lives and societies of others. The study of geography helps us to understand that *where* we live affects *how* we live.



The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.

- St. Augustine, early Christian theologian

Reviewing the Section

1. What are the five themes of geography?
2. What is the difference between absolute and relative location?
3. What are examples of characteristics that are part of human geography?
4. Why is it important to study the relationship between people and their environment?
5. Why do geographers study the movement of people?

Above: Native Brazilians play wooden flutes and drums as part of their cultural tradition in the Amazon River region.

special Feature

Solving the Longitude Problem

Imagine you are on a boat out in the ocean. There is no land in sight. The sky is a clear blue with the sun overhead. You want to get to land, but which way do you go? Without a way to determine location at sea, you would simply be lost and dependent on luck to get home. If only there was a means of finding your way. Sailors learned many methods over the centuries to determine location, and in the modern world, technology and the latitude and longitude grid system can help.

The skill of using latitude and longitude to find locations on Earth or on a map is a part of many social studies classes. In fact, this skill is very important in the study of geography and in real-life applications for many jobs and in private life. Today, there are different apps available for smartphones that use the coordinates of latitude and longitude to guide travelers to their destinations. The same technology can direct commercial airliners around the globe or ships to their ports. These technologies depend on space-based satellites orbiting Earth that provide location information to global positioning system (GPS) receivers in millions of devices worldwide.

It was not this easy to find one's way in the past. In fact, during the age of exploration, when Christopher Columbus and other Europeans were crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the western hemisphere, it was very difficult for sailors to use longitude when they were out of sight of land. Through the use of navigational tools and maps and the position of the sun and stars, navigators on ships could determine latitude. But knowing latitude was not enough. A navigator could tell a ship's captain, "We are at the Equator." Unfortunately, the Equator is nearly 25,000 miles long, so latitude alone is not very helpful.





Spain's kings offered rewards to anyone who could solve the problem of determining longitude. In order for Spain's explorers to be more successful at claiming lands and bringing home treasures, they needed better navigation. The kings were willing to pay for it, but no solution was found.



In 1714, the British government started a competition for someone to invent a way for sailors to use longitude at sea. Like the Spanish kings over 100 years earlier, the English government understood that their expenses would decrease and their profits increase if their ships could be navigated more effectively. Ships and lives had been lost to disasters at sea all because of navigational mistakes due to lack of longitude measurements.

John Harrison was born in 1693 in England. He was originally a mechanic and clockmaker before he became an inventor. Many inventors realized that to determine longitude required an accurate clock. Unfortunately, the pendulum clocks of the day were not too accurate, especially on a damp and rocking ship. After decades of work, Harrison achieved his goal. Experiments in the early 1760s proved that longitude could be calculated using Harrison's method. Though the government argued over whether to give him the full prize money, his spring-powered chronometer (a precise instrument for measuring time) was so accurate that calculating longitude became practical and accurate at sea. Harrison spent a large part of his life on the chronometer project. In the end, his award made him a very rich man.

It is interesting to note that the cost of one of Harrison's chronometers was quite high. In fact, it was about one-third the cost of an entire ship. The ability to accurately determine location at sea, however, made the investment in a chronometer worth the expense. How do you think Harrison would view today's satellite-based navigation systems? In what ways has life improved as a result of Harrison's invention?

Like the Spanish kings over 100 years earlier, the English government understood that their expenses would decrease and their profits increase if their ships could be navigated more effectively. Ships and lives had been lost to disasters at sea all because of navigational mistakes due to lack of longitude measurements.



Top Left: The marine chronometer, invented in 1761 by Englishman John Harrison, proved it was possible to determine longitude. **Top Right:** John Harrison (1693-1776) developed an accurate way for sailors to determine longitude at sea. **Left:** With one foot in the western hemisphere and one foot in the eastern hemisphere, this photographer is straddling the prime meridian in Greenwich, United Kingdom. The position of the prime meridian is critical for determining longitude.

Section 3

What Is Political Science?



As you read, look for

- ▶ why people study government;
- ▶ the three parts of political science;
- ▶ the importance of civic education;
- ▶ **terms: political science, civic life, personal life, politics, government.**

Political science is the study of different types of governments. Once you understand different types of governments, you will begin to understand the decisions different governments make in the hope of helping their citizens. There are three main parts of political science: civic life, politics, and government.

A person's life can be divided into two areas: civic or public and private or personal. **Civic life** looks at how citizens' decisions affect the local community and its decisions. This would include voting for a candidate in an election or even running for office. On the other hand, private or **personal life** includes decisions that people make about their own personal interests, like making the decision about what to eat for lunch.

Politics is a process through which people with different opinions are able to reach decisions together that are agreed to and enforced. Every social group—including family, schools, clubs, and governments—is engaged in politics. Political life helps people accomplish goals they could not reach by themselves.

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The way to secure liberty is to place it in the people's hand, that is, to give them the power at all times to defend it in the legislature and in the courts of justice.

- John Adams,
president of the
United States

“

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be.

- Thomas Jefferson,
president of the
United States

The final part of political science is government. **Government** is made up of the people and institutions in a society that have the authority to make, carry out, and enforce laws, as well as settle disputes. Most government decisions are focused on the distribution of resources in a society, as well as the allocation of benefits and burdens and the management of conflict.

It is important for citizens to understand that people have different opinions and views about civic life, politics, and government. Citizens must be able to make informed, or educated, decisions about their government and what their government should and should not do. Citizens must also be able to make decisions about how they live their lives together and how they can support the proper use of power in the government. It is very important for citizens to understand civic ideals and practices so they can fully participate in society. Such awareness is an essential part of citizenship education.

One important part of citizenship education is understanding the relationship between historical events and government. You will learn about the purposes and functions of government. This will include learning how much power each government has, as well as the difference between democratic and nondemocratic governments. This knowledge will help you comprehend the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy and understand the importance of being an active citizen in your country.



Reviewing the Section

1. Why do people study political science?
2. What are the three parts of political science? Define each one.
3. Why is civic education important?

“

The life of a republic lies certainly in the energy, virtue, and intelligence of its citizen.

- Andrew Johnson,
president of the
United States

“

Every voter ought not merely to vote, but to vote under the inspiration of a high purpose to serve a nation.

- Calvin Coolidge,
president of the
United States

Above: Casting ballots and raising hands are examples of how people can show their opinion on issues.

Below: Europeans tend to buy their fresh fruit, meat, vegetables, and baked goods from small local markets like this German bakery.

Section 4

What Is Economics?

Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

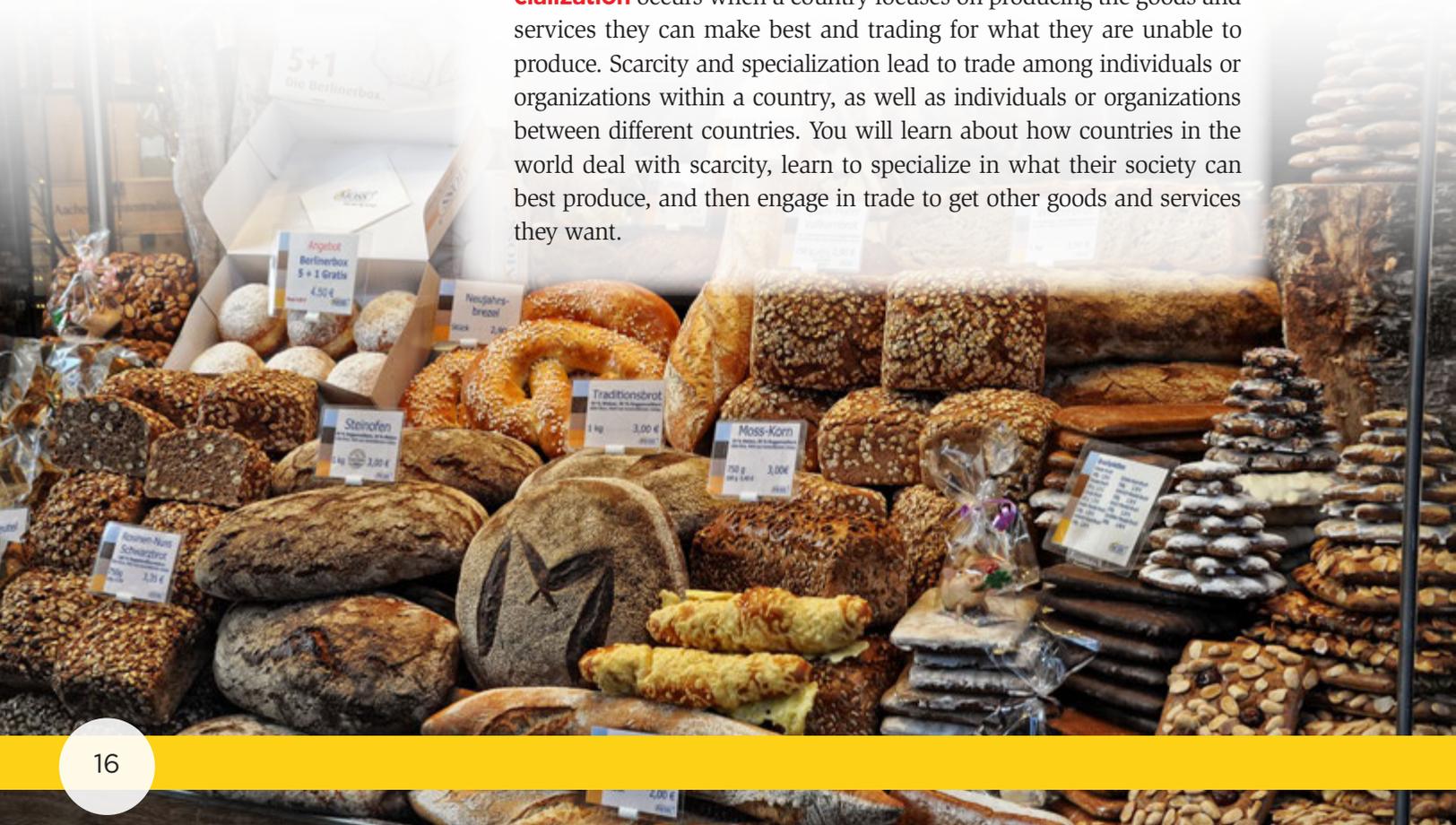
- ▶ why people study economics;
- ▶ the role scarcity and specialization play in creating trade;
- ▶ terms: **economics, scarcity, trade, specialization, domestic, globalization.**

Every nation on the Earth that embraces market economics and the free enterprise system is pulling millions of its people out of poverty. The free enterprise system creates prosperity, not denies it.

- Marco Rubio,
US senator, Florida

Economics is the study of how decisions are made about how to allocate, or distribute, limited resources in order to satisfy our unlimited wants. Resources are limited; therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want. Individuals, groups, and societies all experience **scarcity** (the situation that exists when there is unlimited demand but not enough supply of a good or service). As a result, people must choose some things and give up others. Effective decision making requires a person to compare the additional costs of alternatives, or choices, with the additional benefits.

Trade (the voluntary exchange of goods and services among people and countries) occurs as a result of scarcity and specialization. **Specialization** occurs when a country focuses on producing the goods and services they can make best and trading for what they are unable to produce. Scarcity and specialization lead to trade among individuals or organizations within a country, as well as individuals or organizations between different countries. You will learn about how countries in the world deal with scarcity, learn to specialize in what their society can best produce, and then engage in trade to get other goods and services they want.





Learning about trade allows you to study how people organize production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. It also prepares you to understand **domestic** (having to do with one’s own country) and global economic issues. Being able to understand global interdependence means you understand the increasingly important and diverse global connections among world societies. Because of rapid transportation and instantaneous communication, your world is getting smaller every day. It is important that you know about countries all over the world. Understanding trade and interdependence will also help you understand problems that are a result of **globalization** (the development of an increasingly worldwide economy).

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Economics is all about consumption. People either spend money now or they use financial instruments—like bonds, stocks, and savings accounts—so they can spend more later.

- Adam Davidson,
journalist

Reviewing the Section

1. What is scarcity?
2. Why are scarcity and specialization important to understanding global economics?
3. Why is it important to understand trade?

Above: Atlanta’s highway system, large airport, and advanced technology allow Georgia businesses to trade in the global marketplace.

Section 5

What Is Decision Making?

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Man does not simply exist, but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment.

- Viktor Frankl,
Holocaust survivor

As you read, look for

- ▶ the importance of decision making;
- ▶ the important steps to take before making a decision;
- ▶ terms: **decision, issue, options, consequences, values.**



Learning how to make decisions is at the core of social studies. A **decision** is a determination reached after consideration. Throughout history, people have made decisions by thinking about alternatives and choosing to do what they believe is best for them. Of course, people have not always made the best decisions. In the late 1780s, the leaders of Great Britain decided to relieve overcrowded prisons by sending prisoners to live on the distant continent of Australia. This decision solved one problem, overcrowded prisons. However, one of the effects was the spread of disease among the native Australians who died by the tens of thousands as a result. A decision can be good for one group and bad for another.

To make good decisions, you must first clearly identify an **issue** or problem that needs to be solved. It helps to write out the issue as a question. If your current problem is your need for a new cell phone, you would write that as a question: How can I earn enough money to buy a new cell phone? Many times, the issue or problem has two parts: a goal to accomplish and a barrier, or obstacle, that is preventing the goal from being accomplished. In our example, your goal is to buy a new cell phone and your obstacle is that the cell phone costs more money than you currently have.



Above: Cell phones are a good often purchased for children in the United States.



The next step is for the decision maker to develop a list of possible solutions that could lead to achieving the goal. There may be two, three, or even more **options** (choices). Each option has **consequences** (outcomes), which can be both good and bad. The decision maker must think about the costs and benefits of each alternative. What are the possible solutions for this cell phone problem? Some solutions may be saving your money, earning more money by doing chores, or deciding to wait until the phone you want becomes cheaper. Think through the costs and benefits for each of these solutions.

Decisions involve balancing choices against one's personal values. What you **value**, or what is most important to you, will affect which option you choose. In addition to values, you must also consider both short-term and long-term consequences of each option. How will things be immediately different? How will things be different one month from now, one year from now, or even ten years from now? Think back to our cell phone example and possible solutions. What are the short-term and long-term consequences of each possible choice?

Finally, after combining information about your various options, your values, and the short-term and long-term consequences of each option, it is time to make the decision. You should pick what you think is the best solution to the problem. Be sure to ask yourself the following questions. What do you think should be done? Why do you feel this is the best option? Going back to our example one last time, which solution did you pick? Why do you think that is the best option?

Reviewing the Section

1. Why is decision making important to know about?
2. What are two important steps to take before making a decision?
3. What are important questions to ask yourself before making a final decision?

Above: Students often work after school hours so they can earn money to buy goods they want.

Chapter Review

Chapter Summary

Section 1: What Is History?

- History is the study of successes and failures from the past that have shaped our world today.
- Studying history helps us understand our world and make informed decisions based on examples from the past.
- Studying the history of many places around the world allows us to better understand people from other countries.

Section 2: What Is Geography?

- Geography is the study of the physical features of Earth, as well as human adaptations of and interactions with Earth.
- Location (a position on Earth's surface) can be described as an absolute or relative location.
- Place describes the unique human and physical characteristics of an area.
- Human/environment interaction describes how humans adapt to or change physical environments and how these choices shape the environment and human lifestyles.
- Movement is when people, goods, and ideas travel from one location to another.
- Region is an area with a distinct human and/or physical characteristic that does not necessarily follow political lines.

Section 3: What Is Political Science?

- Political science is the study of different types of governments.
- Civic life examines how citizens' decisions affect their local community and its choices.
- Politics is the process by which people with different opinions reach decisions and agree on enforceable rules.
- Government is the people and institutions with the authority to make, carry out, and enforce laws in addition to other responsibilities.

Section 4: What Is Economics?

- Economics is the study of how decisions are made to distribute limited resources to satisfy our unlimited wants.
- Scarcity (a lack of products and services) and specialization (mainly producing your best product) encourage domestic and international trade.
- Today, countries are interdependent because of a global economy formed from many international trade deals.

Section 5: What Is Decision Making?

- Making decisions is an important process that requires thinking about solutions, consequences, and personal values to solve a specific issue.
- The long-term and short-term consequences of each possible option must be considered.
- Value, or what is most important to you personally, will affect your decision.

Activities for Learning

Reviewing People, Places, and Things



Match each of the following with the correct description that follows:

history
human geography
latitude
longitude
civic life
politics
political science
relative location
specialization

1. the story of the successes and failures from the past that shaped our world
2. an imaginary line that measures a location's distance north or south of the Equator
3. the study of different types of governments
4. how citizens' decisions affect the local community and its decisions
5. characteristics that include languages spoken, customs practiced, and belief systems
6. when a country focuses on producing the goods and services it can make best
7. an imaginary line that measures a location's distance east or west of the prime meridian
8. a location described by where it is in relation, or compared, to somewhere else
9. a process through which people with different opinions are able to reach decisions together that are agreed to and enforced

Understanding the Facts



1. How does studying social studies help make good citizens?
2. What is human geography?
3. Give an example of an idea that moves from one location to another.
4. What is civic life?
5. Do politics exist outside of the government?
6. How do scarcity and specialization create interdependence?
7. What two concepts help people make decisions?
8. How does history help us make decisions today?

Developing Critical Thinking



1. Social studies includes history, geography, political science, and economics. Which discipline (or two) do you think is most important for understanding the world? Why?
2. How is someone's civic life different from his or her private life? Why is it important to understand the difference before engaging in politics?

Writing across the Curriculum



Think of a decision made in the past that has had long-term consequences. Write a short report describing how this decision still affects the world today.

Applying Your Skills



Create a booklet about the five themes of geography with an illustration and definition for each theme.

Exploring Technology



Go to <https://mynasadata.larc.nasa.gov/latitudelongitude-finder/>. Use this website to find the absolute location of these places: (a) your school, (b) a place you want to visit, (c) a city in Africa, and (d) a city in Europe.