

# U.S. HISTORY TO 1865 STUDY GUIDE – 2023 STANDARDS

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## STANDARD USI.1a — Locating North America in Relation to Other Continents and Oceans



**Continents** are large land masses that are surrounded by water. The world's continents include:

- North America
- South America
- Africa
- Asia
- Australia
- Antarctica
- Europe\*



**Oceans** of the world are:

- Atlantic Ocean
- Pacific Ocean
- Arctic Ocean
- Indian Ocean
- Southern Ocean

\*Note: Europe is classified as a continent even though it is not completely surrounded by water. The combined landmass of Europe and Asia is often called Eurasia.

## STANDARD USI.1b — Major Geographic Regions and Bodies of Water in North America

### Geographic Regions



- **Coastal Plain:** Situated along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, the Coastal Plain consists of broad lowlands with many excellent harbors.
- **Appalachian Highlands:** Found west of the Coastal Plain, this region stretches from eastern Canada to western Alabama, including the Piedmont. The area is characterized by old, eroded mountains, which are the oldest in North America.
- **Canadian Shield:** Wrapping around Hudson Bay in a horseshoe shape, the Canadian Shield is marked by hills worn down by erosion and hundreds of lakes formed by glaciers.
- **Interior Lowlands:** Located between the Appalachian Mountains and the Great Plains,

this region features rolling flatlands, many rivers, wide river valleys, and grassy hills.

- **Great Plains:** To the west of the Interior Lowlands and east of the Rocky Mountains, the Great Plains are expansive flat lands that rise in elevation toward the west, covered mostly by grasslands.
- **Rocky Mountains:** Lying west of the Great Plains and east of the Basin and Range, these rugged mountains extend from Alaska almost to Mexico and have high elevations. The Rocky Mountains contain the **Continental Divide**, which determines the direction that rivers flow.
- **Basin and Range:** Positioned west of the Rocky Mountains and east of the Coastal Range, this region consists of areas with varying elevations, isolated mountain ranges, and includes Death Valley, the lowest point in North America.
- **Coastal Range:** Located along the Pacific Coast from California to Canada, the Coastal Range is made up of rugged mountains and fertile valleys. Notable mountain ranges here include the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades.

## Major Bodies of Water

- **Oceans:** Atlantic, Pacific
- **Rivers:** Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Columbia, Colorado, Rio Grande, St. Lawrence
- **Lakes:** The Great Lakes
- **Gulf:** Gulf of Mexico

## Impact of Water Features

- The **Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts** of the United States have enabled connections with other parts of the world through trade, transportation, exploration, and settlement.
- The **Atlantic Ocean** served as a primary route for explorers, early settlers, and later immigrants.
- The **Ohio River** was the "gateway to the west" before the Louisiana Purchase.
- Inland port cities in the Midwest grew along the **Great Lakes**.
- The **Mississippi and Missouri rivers** provided routes for transporting farm and industrial goods, linking U.S. ports to other regions and the world.
- The **Columbia River** was explored by Lewis and Clark.
- The **Colorado River** was explored by the Spanish.
- The **Rio Grande** forms part of the border with Mexico.
- The **Pacific Ocean** was an important route for early explorers seeking a passage to Asia.
- The **Gulf of Mexico** offered the French and Spanish routes for exploring Mexico and other parts of the Americas.
- The **St. Lawrence River** forms part of the northeastern border with Canada and links the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.



## STANDARD US1.1c — Locate the 50 States

