# North America

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| **Essential Knowledge (End Points):** | **By the end of the unit of work the children will:**<br>• know the geographical location of North America on a world map (Northern Hemisphere).<br>• locate and label the most significant rivers of North America.<br>• know and describe the diversity of the different climate zones which are found in North America.<br>• know North Americas population density and why some areas are more sparsely populated.<br>• locate and mark the geographical location of North America's major mountain ranges. | | |
| **Summary** | North America is the third largest continent. The 49° N latitude forms the boundary between the two largest countries – the USA and Canada. The Great Lakes and St Lawrence River act as the boundary between the two countries. Lake Superior is the largest freshwater lake in the world. Mount Mackenzie – an active volcano situated in Alaska – is the highest peak of North America. The world-famous Niagara Falls is located between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.<br><br>There are hundreds of rivers across North America. They are vital for irrigation for agriculture, fishing, the generation of hydroelectricity and as navigation routes for shipping. Rivers are also sacred to the Native American indigenous peoples who, for centuries before European colonisation, learnt to use this limited, precious resource wisely.<br><br>Before the arrival of Europeans in the 1500s and 1600s, the population of North America consisted of Native American tribes in the United States, and the Aztec and Mayan civilisations in what is now Mexico. In the 1600s, Europeans quickly colonised much of North America. Now the indigenous peoples are far fewer and the majority of people have a European heritage.<br><br>The topographic map shows the mountainous areas of North America. The western coastline is dominated by the Rocky Mountain chain. This is also the location of a tectonic plate boundary and the mountains are formed through the process of subduction. There is a great deal of seismic activity in this area as it is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire. | | |
| **Location:** | North America is a continent in the northern hemisphere and mostly within the western hemisphere. It is bordered to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west (where it is separated from Asia by the Bering Strait) and south by the Pacific Ocean, and to the southeast by South America and the Caribbean Sea. | **Vocabulary:** | **latitude:** the distance of a place from the equator<br>**lowlands:** areas of low, flat land<br>**agricultural:** relating to farming and its methods<br>**predominant:** larger in number<br>**irrigation:** watering crops<br>**rises:** begins<br>**numerous:** many<br>**confluence:** where two or more rivers join together<br>**pesticides:** chemicals used to kill insects that eat crops<br>**colonised:** took control over<br>**indigenous:** originally from a country<br>**populous:** with a large population |

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| | | | **sparsely:** with only a small number of people<br>**metropolitan:** relating to a large city<br>**topographic:** relating to the physical features of an area<br>**subduction:** the movement of one tectonic plate below another<br>**seismic:** relating to earthquakes |
| **Physical Features Mountains:** | North America's major mountain ranges are:<br>Alaska Range: extends from the Alaska Peninsula to the border of the Yukon Territory, Canada. The highest peak in North America, Danali (formerly Mount McKinley) – 20,320 ft (6,194 m) – is located here.<br><br>Appalachian Mountains: extend from central Alabama in the USA through the New England states and the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Quebec. They are 1,500 miles (2,400 km) in length.<br><br>Brooks Range: situated in northern Alaska.<br><br>Cascades: stretching from northeastern California across Oregon and Washington. Major peaks include Mt Hood, Mt Rainier and Mt St Helens.<br><br>Coast Range: running along the Pacific Ocean coastlines of California, Oregon and Washington. They also extend along the western border of British Columbia, Canada, and the southern edge of Alaska.<br><br>Rocky Mountains: about 3,000 miles (4,800 km) in length, extend from the US state of New Mexico into the northernmost reaches of Canada.<br><br>Sierra Madres: include two major ranges – the Occidental range and the Oriental range, and one smaller one – the Del Sur range. | **Physical Features Rivers:** | Brazos: rises in the northern part of Texas and flows into the Gulf of Mexico. It is 840 miles (1,351 km) long.<br><br>Churchill: this river is in Canada. It rises in Saskatchewan and flows into Hudson Bay. It passes through numerous lakes and is known for the rapids along its path. It is 1000 miles (1,609 km) long.<br><br>Colorado: rises in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, and flows into the Gulf of California. It is 1,450 miles (2,333 km) long and over the centuries has formed numerous canyons along its course. The most famous of these is the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona.<br><br>Columbia: rises in the Canadian Rockies and flows into the Pacific Ocean. It is 1,152 miles (1,854 km) long.<br><br>Fraser: rises in the Canadian Rockies and flows into the Strait of Georgia, just south of Vancouver. It is 850 miles (1,368 km) long.<br><br>Mackenzie: the longest river in Canada. It is 1,200 miles (1,931 km) long.<br><br>Mississippi: rises in Minnesota and flows into the Gulf of Mexico. It is 2,339 miles (3,764 km) long.<br><br>Missouri: the longest river in North America at 2,500 miles (4,023 km) long. It rises in Montana in the Rocky Mountains and flows into the Mississippi River, just to the north of St Louis. |

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| | Sierra Nevada: situated in eastern California, about 400 miles (640 km) in length. | | Ohio: formed by the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, the Ohio flows into the Mississippi River at the Illinois border and is 975 miles (1,569 km) long.<br><br>Rio Grande: rises in the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado, then flows south through New Mexico. It forms the natural border between Texas and the country of Mexico and flows southeast to the Gulf of Mexico. In Mexico it is known as Rio Bravo del Norte. It is used for drinking water by both countries, but is becoming more polluted because of sewage and pesticides entering the water from population centres along the river that are growing in size.<br><br>St Lawrence: flows out of Lake Ontario and on into the Gulf of St Lawrence. It is 760 miles (1,223 km) long. It forms part of the natural border, along with the Great Lakes, between Canada and the United States.<br><br>Yukon: rises in the Yukon Territory of Canada, and then flows across the border into Alaska, ending at the Bering Sea. It is frozen from October to mid-June. |
| **Human Features:** | Mexico City is the largest city, both in size and population. Its population is 21.3 million, which makes it the largest metropolitan area of the western hemisphere and the largest Spanish-speaking city in the world. | | |
| **Human Processes:** | N/A | **Physical Processes:** | N/A |
| **Techniques:** | N/A | **Human Processes:** | N/A |
| **Diversity:** | Every climate zone can be found in North America as it extends to within 10° of latitude of both the equator and the North Pole.<br>The biomes in North America include: tropical rainforests and savannah on the lowlands of Central | **Key Skills Covered:** | Map Skills |

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| | America, and areas of permanent ice cap in central Greenland.<br><br>These differences contribute to a diverse set of agricultural resources. In the tropical zones of North America, farmers harvest oranges, sugar cane, coffee, cocoa and bananas. Fruits, vegetables and cotton are predominant in the warm, sub-tropical zones of northern Mexico and the United States. The continent's cool temperate zones are ideal for fruits, such as apples and peaches. These areas are also suitable for cattle and corn agriculture.<br><br>North America has an estimated population of 580 million. The most populous cities are:<br>1. Mexico City, Mexico<br>2. New York City, USA<br>3. Los Angeles, USA<br>4. Chicago, USA<br>5. Toronto, Canada<br><br>The northern half of North America – Canada and Greenland – is sparsely populated. This is largely due to the sub-polar and polar climate zones which makes agriculture, transport and living more difficult. | | |
| **Key Local Links:** | N/A | **Common Misconceptions:** | North America is the same as the USA. |

| | Component Statements | Extending Knowledge | |
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| **To know the geographical location of North America on a world map. (Northern Hemisphere)** | Children will know:<br>• North America is a continent in the northern hemisphere and mostly within the western hemisphere.<br>• It is bordered to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west (where it is separated from Asia by the Bering Strait) and south by the Pacific Ocean, and to the southeast by South America and the Caribbean Sea.<br>• North America is made up of Alaska (USA), USA, Greenland, Canada, Mexico etc.<br>• The 49° N latitude forms the boundary between the two largest countries – the USA and Canada.<br>• North America is the 3rd Largest continent (Collins Primary Atlas Page 38). | • Compare and contrast the geographical location of North America with that of Europe.<br><br>• Point out important locational details about North America. | • Investigate the significance of the Bering Strait between North America and Asia.<br><br>• Investigate why the southern parts of North America are more prone to hurricanes than the northern parts.<br><br>• Relate your answer to climate zones, ocean currents and weather patterns. |
| **To locate and label the most significant rivers of North America.** | Children will know:<br>• The where the 13 major rivers in North America (Brazos, Churchill, Colorado, Columbia, Fraser, McKenzie, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Rio Grande, St Lawrence, Yukon), are located and label them on a map.<br>(Collins Primary Map Page 39).<br>• The rivers are vital for irrigation for agriculture, fishing, the generation of hydroelectricity and as navigation routes for shipping. | • Compare and contrast the geographical locations of the Yukon and Mississippi rivers.<br><br>• Compare and contrast the geographical locations of the Colorado and Danube rivers.<br><br>• Explain why pollution in a river affects more than one population. Use the Rio Grande as an example. | • Investigate how goods are traded using North American rivers, using locational examples.<br><br>• Investigate the physical features found along the route of the Colorado River. |
| **To know and describe the** | Children will know: | • Compare and contrast the physical and human diversity of areas of high and low latitude in North America. | • Investigate agricultural diversity in Jamaica and the United States of America. Draw some conclusions. |

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| **diversity of the different climate zones which are found in North America.** | • Every climate zone can be found in North America as it extends to within 10° of latitude of both the equator and the North Pole.<br>• The biomes in North America include: tropical rainforests and savannah on the lowlands of Central America, and areas of permanent ice cap in central Greenland.<br>• The biomes lead to a diverse set of agricultural resources. In the tropical zones of North America, farmers harvest oranges, sugar cane, coffee, cocoa and bananas. Fruits, vegetables and cotton are predominant in the warm, sub-tropical zones of northern Mexico and the United States. The continent's cool temperate zones are ideal for fruits, such as apples and peaches. These areas are also suitable for cattle and corn agriculture. | | |
| **To know North Americas population density and why some areas are more sparsely populated.** | Children will know:<br>• North America has an estimated population of 580 million. The most populous cities are:<br>1. Mexico City, Mexico<br>2. New York City, USA<br>3. Los Angeles, USA<br>4. Chicago, USA<br>5. Toronto, Canada<br>• The northern half of North America – Canada and Greenland – is sparsely populated. This is largely due to the sub-polar and polar climate zones which makes agriculture, transport and living more difficult. | • Compare and contrast the populations of the most and least populous places in North America.<br>• Graph information about the population of the ten most populous cities in North America.<br>• Compare and contrast the housing for a typical person* in Mexico City and in New York City.<br>(*a typical person is someone who has the average income compared with others living in that location). | • Investigate the differences between the terms ‘metropolitan’ and ‘cosmopolitan'.<br>• Investigate the phrase ‘primate city’. |

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| **To locate and mark the geographical location of North America's major mountain ranges.** | Children will know:<br>• The topographic map shows the mountainous areas of North America (Collins Primary Atlas Page 39).<br>• The geographical location of the 8 major mountain ranges in North America and mark them on a map.<br>• The highest peak in North America, Danali (formerly Mount McKinley) – 20,320 ft (6,194 m). | • Compare and contrast the features of a topographic map and those of a political map, using examples from North America.<br>• Explain why a geographer may use a variety of map types for the same location.<br>• Give a broad overview (apply) of the geographical distribution of mountain ranges in North America.<br>• Show how the western coast of North America is part of a wider seismic zone. | • Propose an appropriate set of maps to understand the route of the transcontinental railroad in the United States of America.<br>• Relate your knowledge of biomes in North America to your knowledge of mountainous areas and draw some conclusions. |