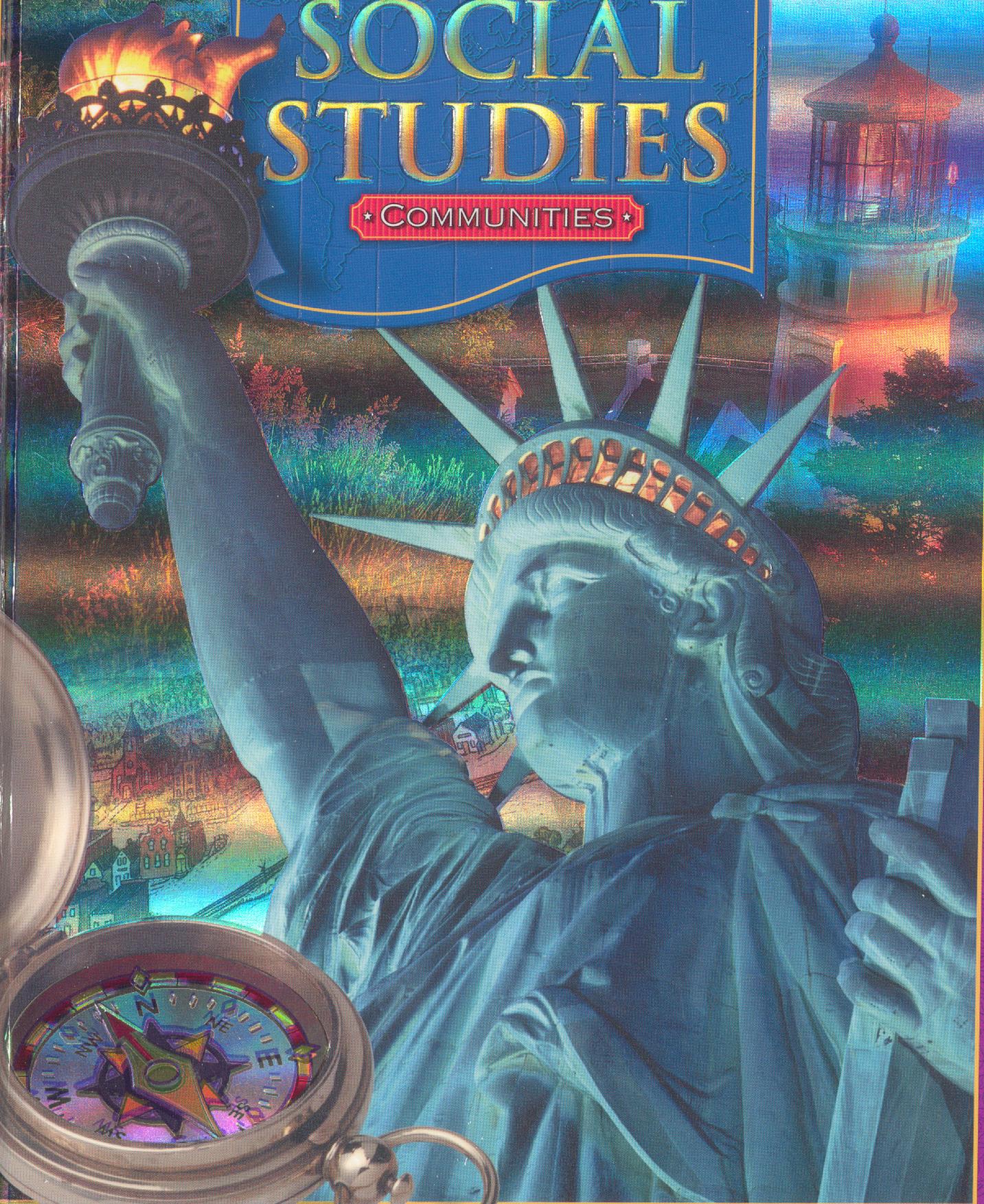


HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

SOCIAL STUDIES

★ COMMUNITIES ★



Core Lesson 2

Our Country's Geography

VOCABULARY

coast
desert
region

Build on What You Know When you look outside, what kinds of landforms do you see? Children in another part of the country see different landforms.

READING SKILL

Categorize Place each landform and body of water in the right category: West, Central, East.

West	Central	East

Traveling West to East

The United States has many types of landforms and bodies of water. The map on the next page shows the location of plains and plateaus, lakes and rivers. A location is where a place is on the earth.



Look on the map to find where the land and the Pacific Ocean meet. This is the West Coast. A **coast** is the land next to the ocean. Mountain ranges, or long rows of mountains, are located along the West Coast. These are the Coast Ranges. Find the Sierra Nevada mountains. Between these two ranges lies the Central Valley.

Sierra Nevada This mountain range is about 400 miles long.

Landforms in the United States



Skill Reading Maps What landforms are in Alaska?

Dry Land, Sharp Peaks

East of the Sierra Nevada is the Basin and Range. Low, flat areas of desert and mountains cover this part of the country. A **desert** is a dry area where little rain falls and few plants grow. In summer, deserts can be hot during the day and cooler at night. The hottest place in the country, Death Valley, is in the Basin and Range.

Move southeast on the map to find the Colorado Plateau. Here are mountains and canyons. A canyon is a V-shaped valley made by a river. Find the Grand Canyon. In some places it is more than a mile deep. The Rocky Mountains, the largest mountain range in the country, are east of the Grand Canyon.

Review Name three landforms in the western part of our country.

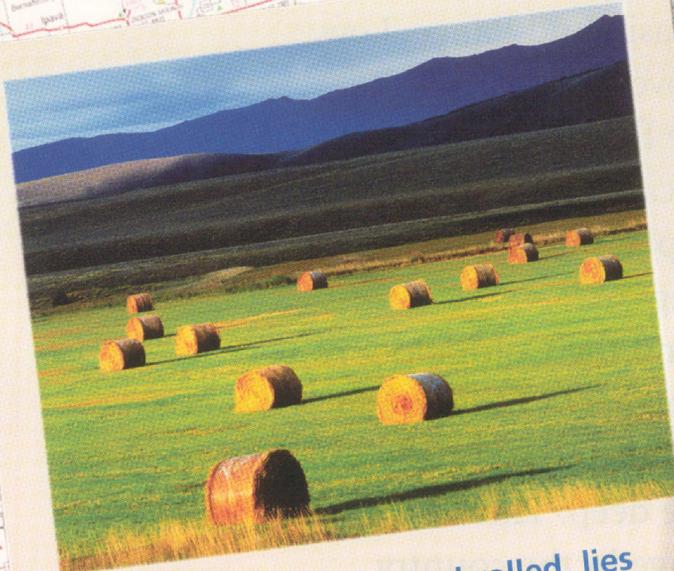
The Central United States

East of the Rocky Mountains lies the central part of the United States. Here the land flattens out. Rivers, lakes, and plains are the main features of the central part of the country.

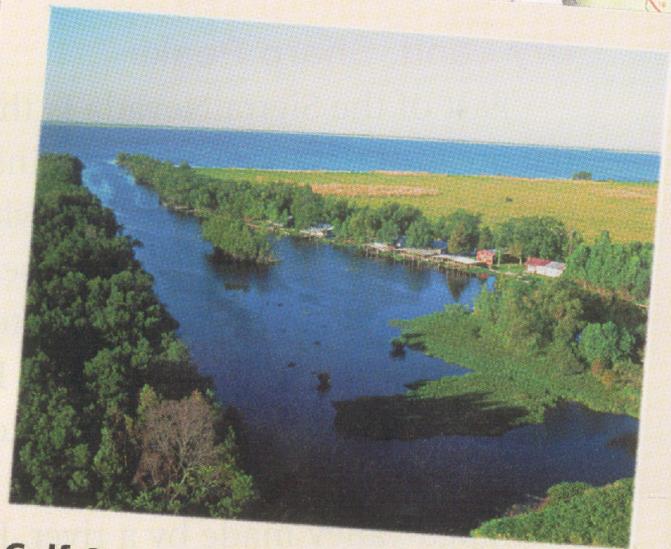


The Great Plains are a vast region of grasslands. A **region** is an area that shares one or more features. Those features make one region different from another region. The Great Plains are gently rolling and dry, but they are not as dry as a desert.

Farther to the east, in the Central Plains, tall grasses, and forests grow. Land there is mostly flat and lower than the Great Plains. To the south lies the Gulf Coastal Plain. Much of this region is low and flat. Wetlands cover part of the plain.



Great Plains Hay, cut and rolled, lies on a field in Colorado.



Gulf Coastal Plain Wetlands in Louisiana are a feature of this region.

A Mighty River and Great Lakes

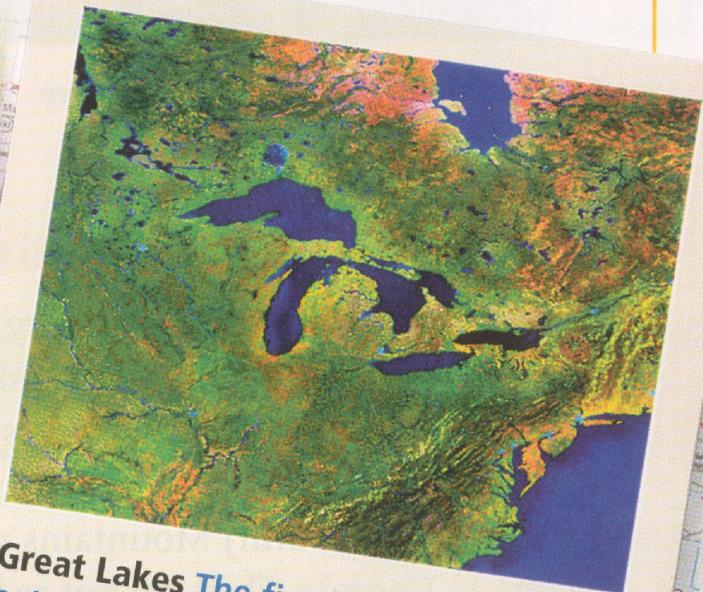
On the map, find where the Mississippi River enters the Gulf of Mexico. The river flows south for more than 2,000 miles to its mouth. The Mississippi is a major shipping route. Many barges travel up and down the river. They carry things such as corn and coal from port to port.

Look all the way north on the map. You will see five huge lakes. These are the Great Lakes. Together, the lakes form the earth's largest body of fresh water.

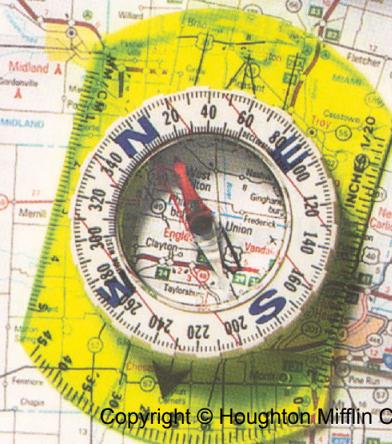
Review In what way is the central part of the country different from the western part?

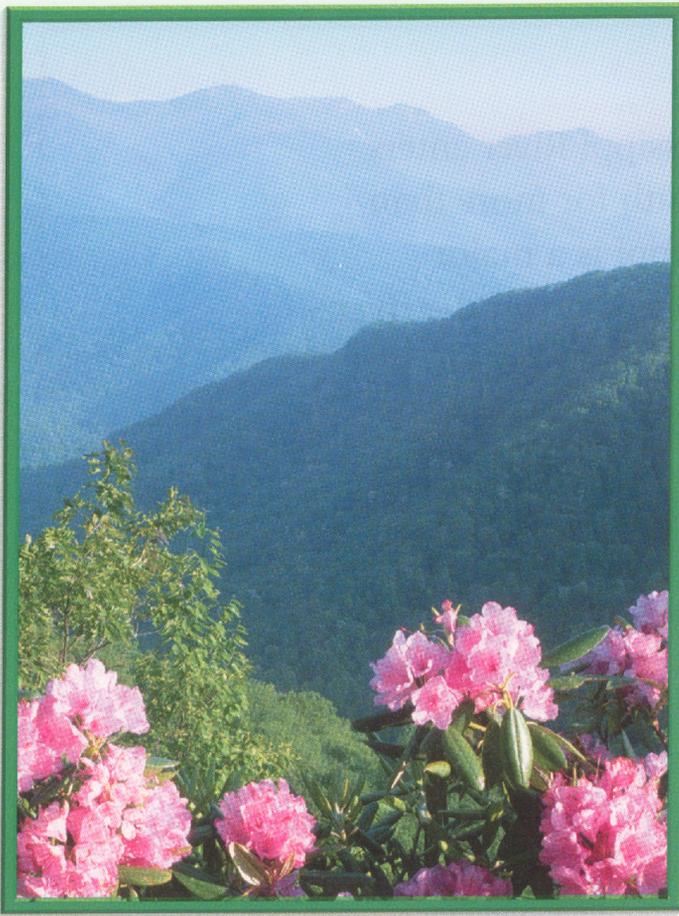


Mississippi River Barges move along the river in Illinois.

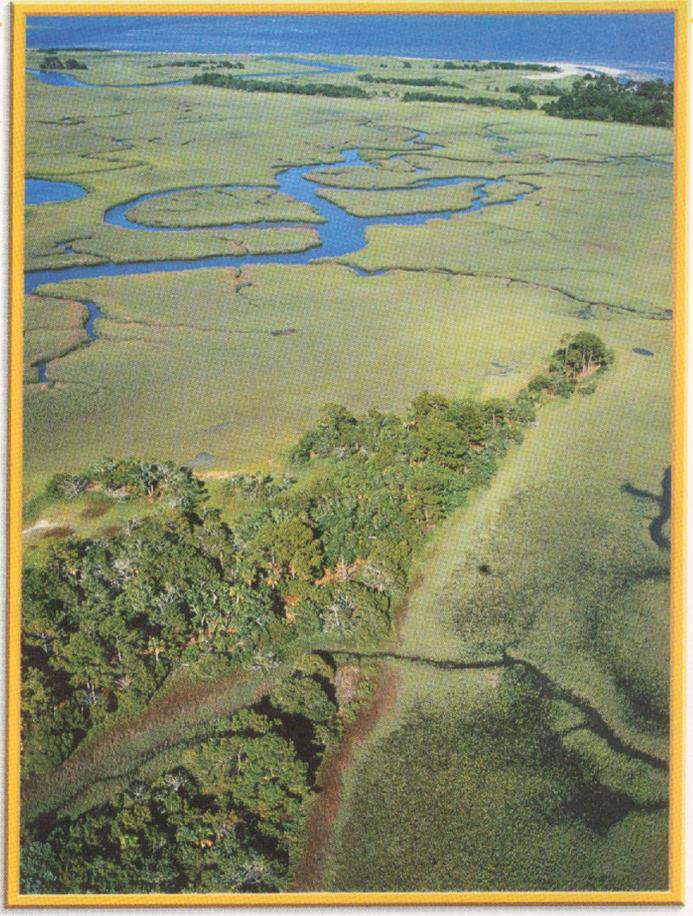


Great Lakes The five lakes are located between Canada and the United States.





Appalachians The highest peaks are less than 7,000 feet above the sea.

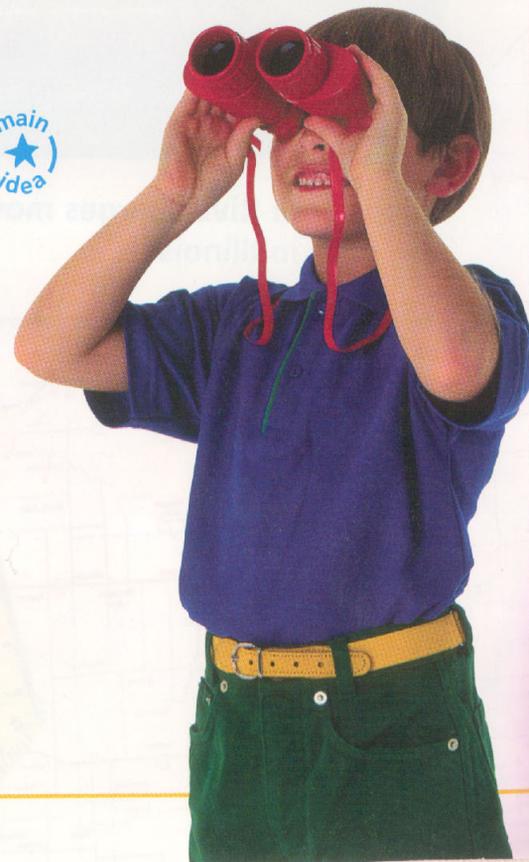


Atlantic Coastal Plain This flat wetland in South Carolina is a salt marsh.

Eastern Mountains and Plains

The final region of the country is located east of the plains and the Great Lakes. Mountains, hills, plains, and rivers are the main features of this region. The Appalachian (ap uh LAY chee uhn) Mountains run from Maine to Georgia. They are not as high as the Rocky Mountains. Millions of years of erosion have made these mountain peaks low and rounded.

East of the Appalachian Mountains is the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Parts of the plain are good for farming. Beaches and wetlands lie along the coast. This region spreads from Massachusetts down to Florida.



Wetlands and Ocean

Using the map on page 37, find a peninsula in the south. A peninsula is land nearly surrounded by water. On Florida's southern end are the Everglades. They are vast wetlands. East of the Everglades is the second largest ocean in the world, the Atlantic Ocean.

The Atlantic and Pacific oceans mark the coasts of the United States. Many landforms shape the country between them. In the West are mountain, desert, and plateau regions. The central United States has plains, rivers, and lakes. The East is a region of low mountains, coastal plains, and wetlands.



Florida The Florida peninsula is about 400 miles long.

Review Describe some of the main features of the eastern part of the country.

Lesson Review

- 1 VOCABULARY** Write a sentence using **coast** and **region**.
- 2 READING SKILL** Refer to your chart. In which **category** did you place wetlands? Why?
- 3 MAIN IDEA: Geography** Write one or two sentences describing a landform you might find in the western United States.
- 4 MAIN IDEA: Geography** Compare the Appalachian Mountains to the Rocky Mountains.
- 5 CRITICAL THINKING: Infer** If you decided to walk from the West Coast to the East Coast, which parts of the country might be the hardest to pass through? Why?

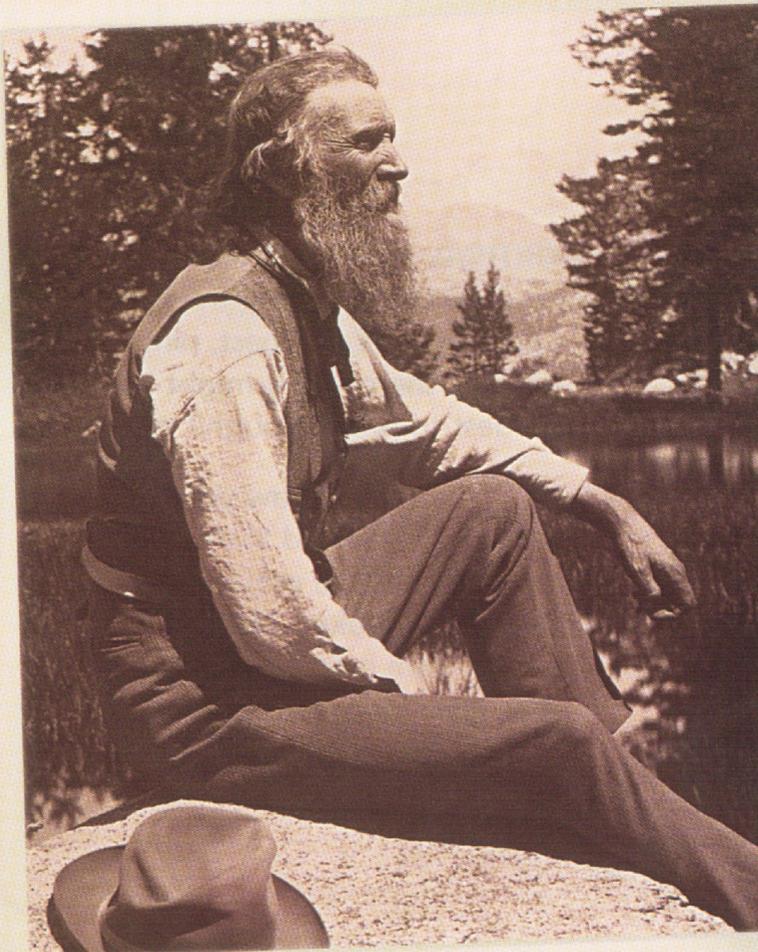


MAP ACTIVITY Draw your own map of the United States from memory. Include mountains, oceans, and lakes. Then look at a classroom map and compare it to your map.



Protecting the Land

Stand in the stillness of a forest. Hear the birds call through a wetland. Forests and wetlands are some of the special places in our country. We enjoy them today because people in the past worked to protect them.



John Muir

(1838–1914)

As a young boy, John Muir (myur) explored the forest and countryside near his home. In college, one of his favorite subjects was botany, or the study of plants. This led him to travel through Wisconsin, Iowa, and parts of Canada to learn more about plants.

Later, Muir took long journeys through other parts of our country. He lived for several years in the Yosemite Valley in California. He wrote about Yosemite's plants and amazing landforms. He wrote articles about the need to care for and protect the valley. In 1890, United States leaders made Yosemite a national park.



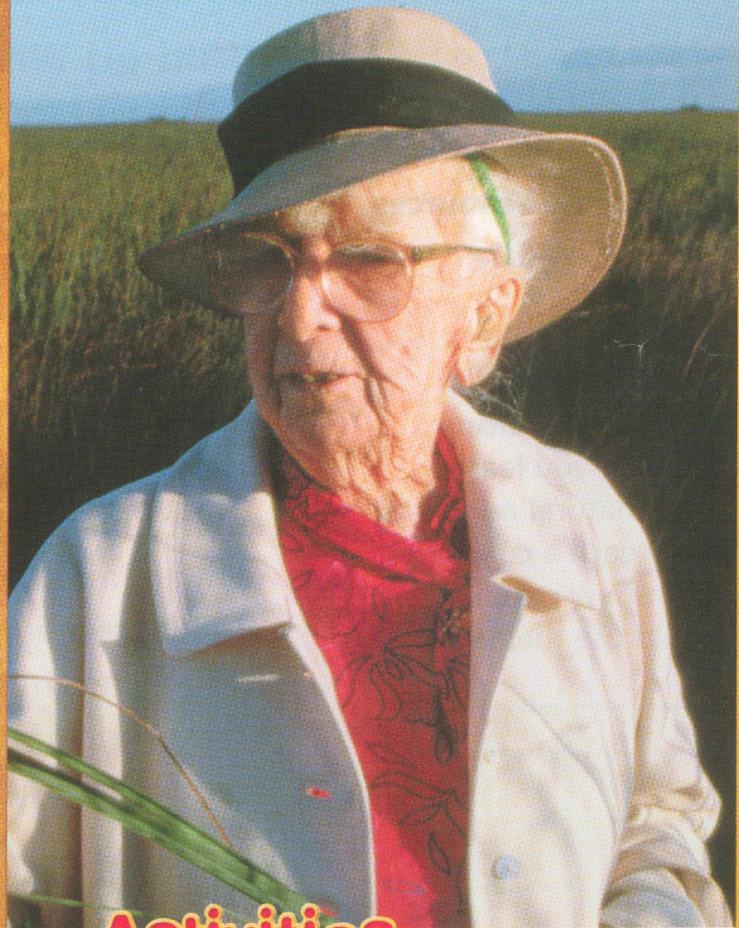
Marjory Stoneman Douglas

(1890–1998)

Like John Muir, Marjory Stoneman Douglas loved the land around her. She moved to Florida as a young woman and worked as a newspaper reporter. She began writing about the Everglades and the alligators, pelicans, and panthers there.

In a book, Douglas explained that the Everglades are like a big river. People began to understand the **region** better. The government made part of the Everglades a national park in 1947.

Douglas worked late into her life teaching people about the Everglades. She became known as the “Grandmother of the Glades.”



Activities

- 1. THINK ABOUT IT** In what ways did John Muir and Marjory Stoneman Douglas show they were **caring** for the land?
- 2. PRESENT IT** Think about an outdoor place you love in your community. Write and present a short description of its plants, animals, or landforms.



Technology Read more biographies at Education Place.

www.eduplace.com/kids/hmss/