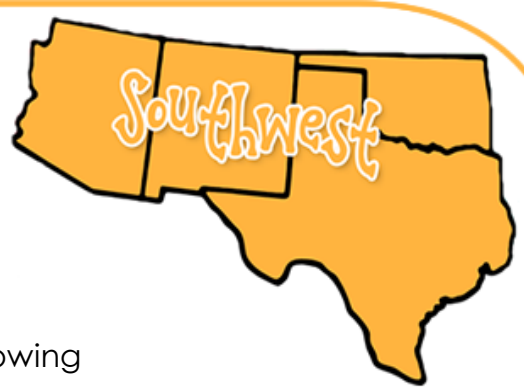


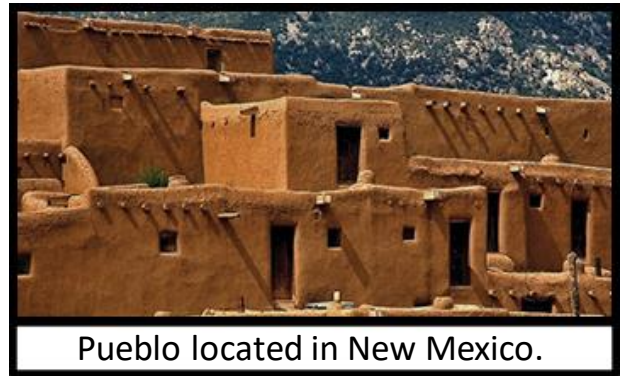
# The Southwest



## The History

The Southwest region of the U.S. is made up of the following four states: Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Native American civilizations existed for thousands of years before Europeans explored the land that was to become the American Southwest. In New Mexico and Arizona, Ancestral Pueblo cultures flourished. Pueblos were buildings usually built on steep rock ledges or mesas. The pueblos were several stories tall and had many rooms. In Oklahoma, there were mound builders who formed large mounds of earth to use as native burial or ceremonial sites. The land that became Texas



was home to many different Native American tribes. In the 1500s, life changed a lot for the indigenous people when the Spanish explorers arrived.

The Spanish brought deadly diseases from Europe that the native people had never been exposed to before. The Spanish also wanted to force their customs and beliefs on those already living on the land, which resulted in fights. Disease and violence killed many of the native people soon after the Spanish arrival. Most of the Southwest remained under Spanish control until the 1800s. After Mexico won its freedom from Spain in 1821, this region was considered part of Mexico's territory. However, when the United States won the Mexican-American War (1846-48), Mexico gave up its northern lands which became the American Southwest and California. Oklahoma had been under French rule until 1803 when it became part of the United States as part of a deal called the Louisiana Purchase.

## Climate

Much of the land in the Southwest region is desert. Deserts are hot and dry. The Southwest is typically thought of as a hot, dry area of land. This is true in many, but not all, parts of this region. Arizona has some of the hottest summers in the United States,

## The Southwest Region

while New Mexico's mountains get snowfall even in early fall. This region doesn't get a lot of precipitation (rain/snow). When it does rain, it can become quite dangerous causing flash floods. During a flash flood, so much rain will fall in a short time period that the dry land can't absorb it fast enough. The water can easily cover roads and carry cars away.

The Southwest is known for having very powerful storms such as thunderstorms, tornadoes and hurricanes. The eastern coast of Texas borders the Gulf of Mexico. Many powerful hurricanes have come ashore and caused damage in Texas. Oklahoma and northern Texas are part of *Tornado Alley*. That is an area that gets many tornadoes every year. Tornadoes can form quickly and be very deadly.



### The Land

The physical geography in the Southwest includes, plains (flat, fertile fields), hills, deserts and mountain ranges. As the picture below shows, mountains are found in all four states in this region. A large body of water called the Gulf of Mexico borders this region southeast of Texas. Mexico borders it to the south. Outside of the cities, this region is a land of open spaces.



Even though only four states make up this region, it still covers quite a bit of land. Texas is the second largest U.S. state by area, only smaller than Alaska. In Texas alone you will find coastal lands, great plains, rolling hills, a plateau, desert valleys and wooded mountain slopes. Only about 10% of Texas is desert. That leaves

a lot of space for farms and ranches. Texas leads the country in raising cattle, horses, sheep and goats. They also grow more cotton than any other state.

In Oklahoma you will find mountains, canyons, mesas (medium size flat-topped hill or mountain) and plenty of fertile plains. New Mexico has mountains, deserts, caverns and colorful canyons. It even has a supervolcano called Valles Caldera. It is capable of making a volcanic eruption thousands of times larger than normal volcanoes. Even though New Mexico is a large state, it does not have a lot of water located in rivers or lakes. That makes it difficult to grow crops. In Arizona you will find mountains, forests, deserts, plateaus (large size flat-topped hill or mountain) and deep canyons. One very well known canyon is called the Grand Canyon. It is colorful, with steep sides and it is very deep.

### **Economy**

Many types of industries can be found in the Southwest including fishing, tourism, agriculture, mining and oil production. With great access to the Gulf of Mexico, commercial fishing is an important industry in Texas.

Vacationers to the Southwest enjoy camping, boating, hiking, skiing and sightseeing. Tourists visit national parks, beach resorts and many historical sights. Both farming and ranching are found in the rural areas.

Farmers in the Southwest grow crops including cotton, grain, fruits and vegetables. Ranchers raise and sell livestock including cattle, horses, sheep and goats.

Using mineral resources, the Southwest leads in creating

cement, crushed stone, lime, salt, sand and gravel. Arizona mines two-thirds of the nation's copper. Oil wells and natural gas production are particularly important parts of the economies in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.



Oil well in Texas.

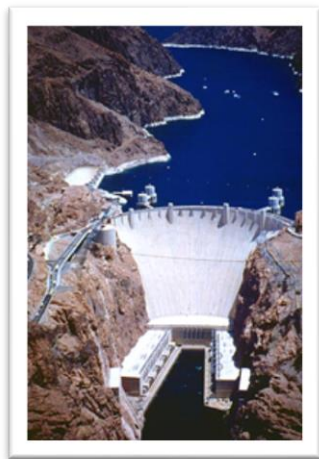
### **Natural Resources**

Natural resources are materials that are found in the environment which are not made by humans. People can then use the natural resources to make other helpful things. There are many natural resources found in this region including oil, copper and minerals.

Even wind, water and sun are natural resources that are used to create energy.

## Landmarks

Landmarks are important places. They can be man-made things such as a monument. They can be historical locations that help to remind us of important events that happened there. They can also be things created by nature that are unique in some way. There are many landmarks in the four states that make up the Southwest region. Here, we will take a look at just a few of them.



### Hoover Dam (Arizona/Nevada border)

The Hoover Dam was built in the 1930s on the Colorado river. It is named after President Herbert Hoover. The dam is a huge concrete barrier that controls floods, provides irrigation water for growing crops and produces hydropower (water power). The dam captures the power that results from the force of falling or fast moving water. Hydropower can be used to create electricity for people to use in their homes and businesses. This is a great way to create energy and it is not bad for the environment. The dam uses the water's power without creating dangerous pollution. Plus, it is a renewable resource so we won't run out of it naturally.

### Grand Canyon (Arizona)

The Grand Canyon is an official national park. Geologists (scientists who study the Earth) have found evidence that it took the Grand Canyon millions of years to form. Slowly, wind and water carried away rock and soil from the ground. This formed a hole in the ground and over the years it became bigger and bigger. When wind and water move rocks and soil away, it is called erosion and it is still happening today. The Grand Canyon is so wide and so deep that it can be seen by the astronauts when they are up in space! The Grand Canyon is so large that it contains many outdoor neighborhoods, called ecosystems. It has snow covered forests, running waterfalls and hot dry deserts. Many different plants and animals live in these ecosystems.



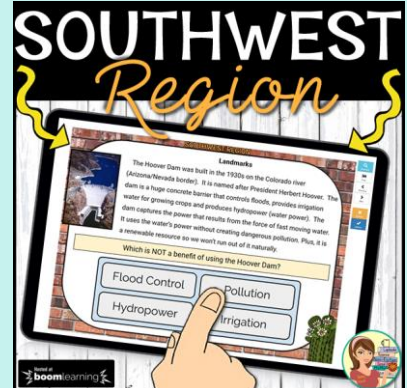
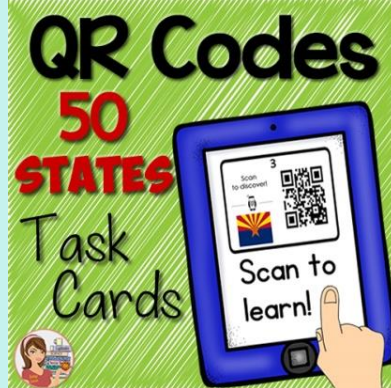
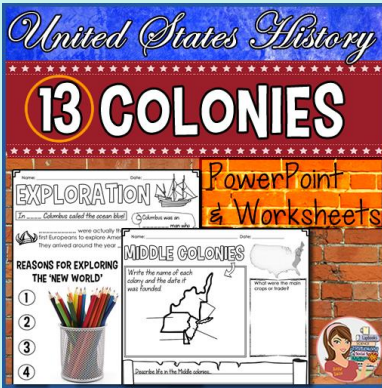
### Navajo National Monument (Navajo Nation Territory)

Native American people have a long history of living on the land that is known as the Southwest region. Today, many aspects of their traditional culture are still practiced by those living there. The Navajo National Monument exists to preserve and protect cliff dwellings built by the Ancestral Puebloan People.

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