

Our North American Neighbors



LEVEL D-2 • Written by Elfrieda H. Hiebert



People in cars enter
Canada from the
United States at border
crossing like this one.

Three North American Countries

The United States is in North America. Canada is its northern neighbor, and Mexico is its southern neighbor.

With almost 4 million square miles, Canada is the second-largest country in the world. However, Canada has only about 40 million people. In contrast, although Mexico has only about one-fifth the land area of Canada, it has about 130 million people.

The United States has less land area than Canada but more than Mexico. In 2022, almost 330 million people lived in the United States. That means that the United States has about eight times more people than Canada and about two and a half times more people than Mexico.

Key Notes:

How are Canada, Mexico, and the United States different in size?



**The Canadian Rockies
in Alberta are known for
their beauty.**

Comparing Canada and the United States

Canada and the United States are similar in many ways. Both countries stretch for thousands of miles. The Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains are in the middle of both countries.

Most people in both countries speak English because many of the settlers came from England. Canada also had many settlers from France. In some parts of Canada, most people speak French. Many signs in Canada are in both English and French.

People in both the United States and Canada elect representatives to govern them. However, the two countries choose their leaders differently. While people in the United States elect a president, Canada's elected representatives choose its leader.

Key Notes:

How do the people of the United States and Canada choose their leaders?



**This park in Mexico
City is full of history.**

Mexico and Its North American Neighbors

Compared to the land area of Canada and the United States, Mexico's land area is small. At some points, Mexico's east and west coasts are close together. However, traveling in Mexico can be difficult because the country has mountain ranges near both coasts. Therefore, most of Mexico's population lives in the center of the country, where travel is easier.

Although most of the population of Canada and the United States speaks English, most of Mexico's population speaks Spanish. That is because many of Mexico's settlers were from Spain. Also, because Mexico is the farthest south, the temperature is warmer there than the rest of North America.

Key Notes:

Why is Spanish the primary language of Mexico?



**These are descendants
of the Aztec people who
built Mexico City.**

Mexico City

Mexico's capital, Mexico City, is the oldest city in North America. When the Spanish arrived in North America more than 450 years ago, they found a city already located there. People called the Aztecs had built the city, which had some large pyramids. Today, visitors from around the world go to see the Aztec pyramids.

Mexico City is also famous for its size and height. It is the fifth largest city in the world. More than 22 million people, or almost one-fifth of the Mexican population, live there. Mexico City is also the highest city in North America. It is almost one and one-half miles above sea level.

Key Notes:

What did the Spanish settlers find when they arrived in North America?

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