

Geo Fact

The Old Faithful Geyser is a cone type geyser. It erupts at the interval of around 65 minutes and rise from 32m to 56m

Appalachian Mountains

Appalachian Mountains occupy the eastern part of the continent. They are also called the Eastern Highlands. The Appalachian Mountains are the old fold mountains, and were once the principal mountain system of North America. Continuous erosion over millions of years has brought down the peaks to around 1500 metres height. These mountains spread out over a length of 2,575 kilometres and run parallel to the eastern margin of the North America. It starts from Newfoundland in the north and reaches Atlanta in the south. The important ranges are the White Mountains, Green Mountains and the Blue Ridge. The highest mountain of this mountain system is **Mount Washington** which rises around 1800 metres high. On the eastern side lies the Piedmont Plateau. The Appalachian ranges are characterised by steep hillsides in the east and narrow valleys. There are many rivers that flow down these steep sides into the Piedmont Plateau. They fall down sharply and form waterfalls. This



Fig. 7.4 Coal Mines in Appalachian

edge of the Piedmont Plateau is called the **Fall Line**. These rivers and waterfalls are used to generate hydroelectricity. The Appalachian Mountains have a vast store of minerals.

The Canadian Shield

The Canadian Shield forms the heart of the continent of North America. About half the area of Canada, stretching from the Hudson Bay to the Great Lakes is occupied by the Canadian Shield, also known as the **Laurentian Shield**. The Canadian Shield area has very rich mineral and water resources. The Canadian Shield contains rocks which are over 2 million years old. The old hard rocks are rich in deposits of gold, silver, copper, nickel and lead.

This area was covered with thick ice sheets during the Ice Age. As the glaciers moved, the surface got eroded and scoured. They scraped out a plain and many depressions. After the Ice Age, these depressions got filled with water and formed the **Great Lakes**. The southern edge of the Canadian Shield is thus covered by five Great Lakes—**Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie and Lake Superior**. Located between the Lake Erie and the Lake Ontario is the famous horseshoe-shaped **Niagara Falls**. Besides the five Great

NORTH AMERICA: FACT FILE

Largest River: Mississippi (6019 km)

Largest Freshwater Lake: Lake Superior

Highest point: Mt. McKinley in Alaska (20, 322 ft or 6194 metres)

Lowest point: Death Valley in California (282 ft or 86 metres below sea level)

North America is the third largest continent. It has all the major Biomes and all types of climate. There are 965 species of mammals. It has hosted Olympics 12 times.

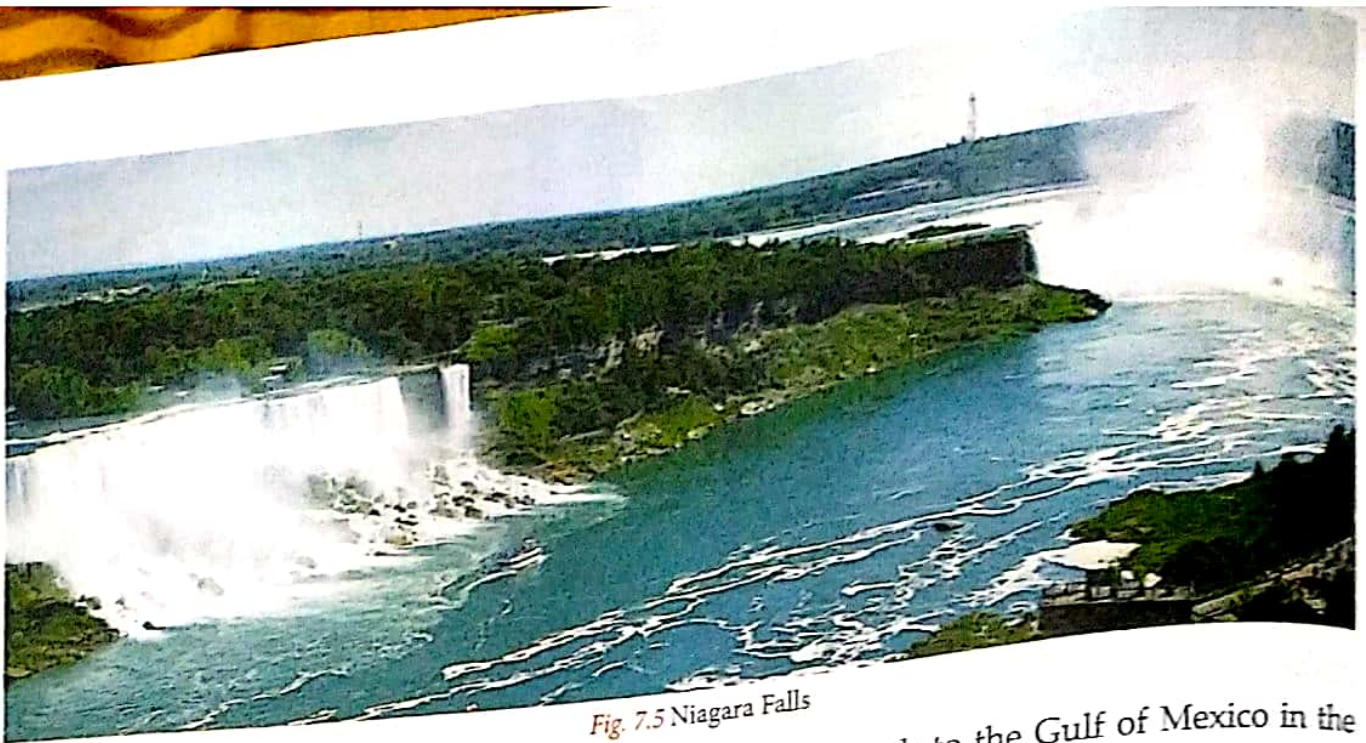


Fig. 7.5 Niagara Falls

Lakes, the other long narrow glacial lakes include the Great Bear Lake, Lake Winnipeg, Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca.

The Labrador Plateau that lies in the north-eastern part, forms the highland edge to the shield.

The Great Central Plains

The Great Central Plains are also known as the Central Lowlands. The vast undulating plains occupy the area between the Western Cordilleras and the Appalachian Mountains covering a length of 2,000 km from east to west, and 6,000 km from north to south extending from the Arctic Ocean and Hudson



Fig. 7.6 Extensive Wheat Farms in Central North America

Bay in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south. The Great Central Plains are elevated to about 500 metres in the west and slope northwards towards the Arctic Ocean. The northward slope is indicated by the River McKenzie. These plains are among the most fertile regions of the world because they are covered with the layers of sediment deposited by the rivers and the glaciers. The southern part, which also slopes downward, is drained by River Mississippi. Extensive cultivation is practised in this region.

RIVERS AND LAKES

The large continental land mass of North America has several rivers flowing through it. Most of the rivers have their source in the Western Cordilleras and drain:

- Northward into the Arctic Ocean and the Hudson Bay: Nelson, Saskatchewan and McKenzie
- Eastward into the Atlantic Ocean: St Lawrence, Hudson, Potomac, Delaware, Tennessee
- Southward into the Gulf of Mexico: Mississippi (and its tributaries the Missouri, Ohio, Arkansas), Rio Grande

- Westward into the Pacific Ocean: Columbia, Fraser, Yukon, Colorado, Snake

Thus, all these rivers of North America can be grouped on the basis of the direction of their flow and the water body they fall into.

The rivers play a very important role in the development of the economy of North America. The St. Lawrence along with the Great Lakes forms an important inland waterway.

This river drains one of the busiest industrial belts of the world to transport industrial goods. The Mississippi-Missouri drains a vast area to form the fertile Prairies of America to benefit agriculture. The swift-flowing rivers coming down the Appalachian Mountains as well as

the Western Cordillera have been used for the generation of electricity. Thus, they help in boosting the economy of the continent. The River Colorado flows through a steep-sided gorge called the Grand Canyon. It is an area of scenic beauty and of great tourist interest.

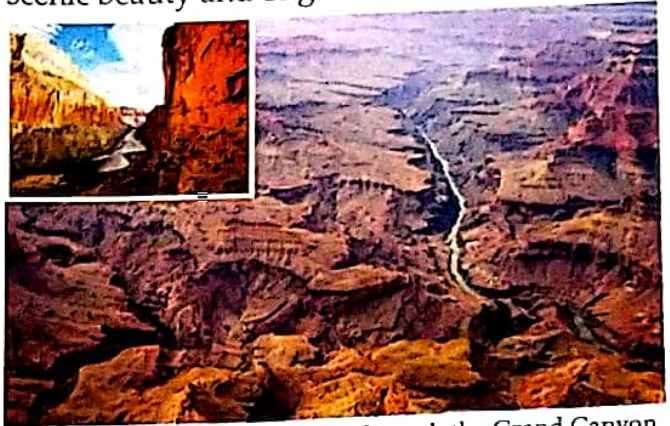
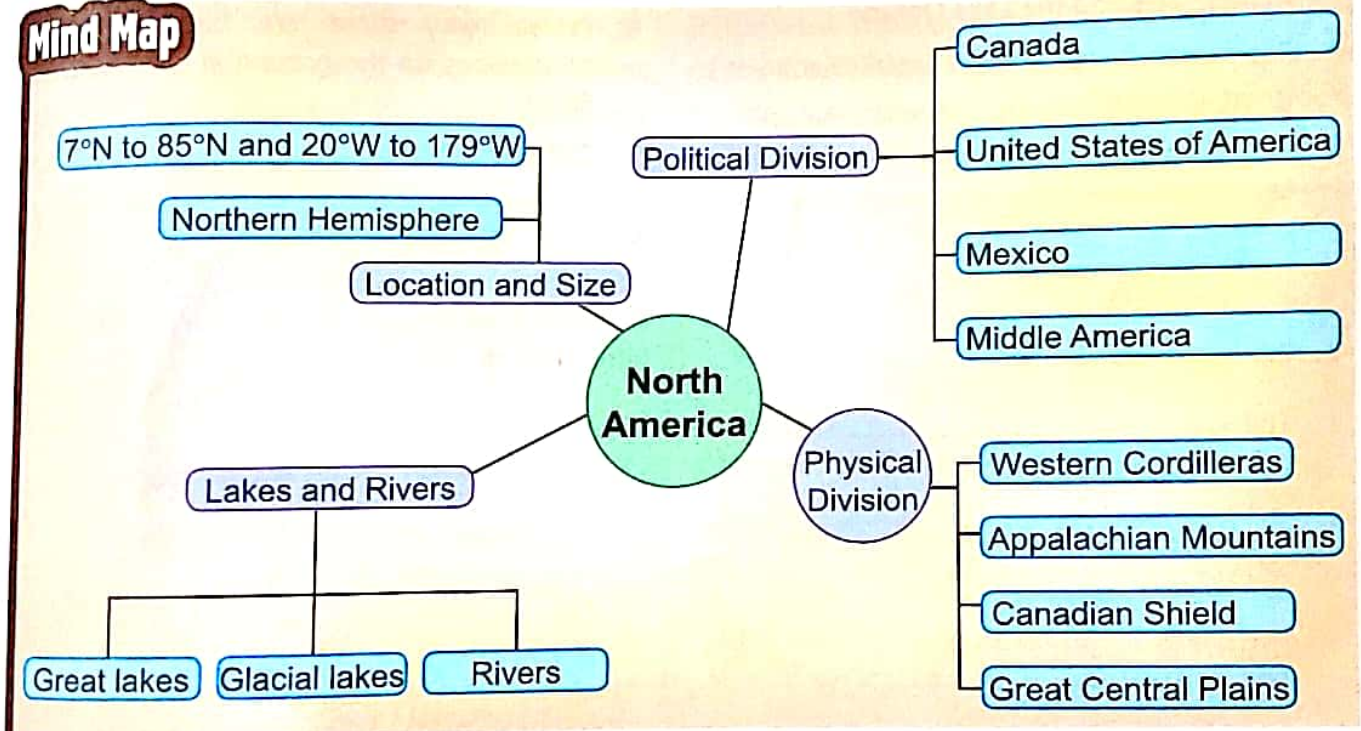


Fig. 7.7 Colorado River Flowing through the Grand Canyon

Mind Map



Geo Terms

- Hot Spring:** When a large source of water near hot magma gets heated up, the water slowly seeps out of a crack or fissure in the Earth's crust creating a 'Hot Spring'
- Geysers:** A hot spring, from where the jets of steam and boiling water are thrown out (of the Earth) automatically at regular intervals
- Gorge:** A narrow, steep-sided valley
- Canyon:** A broad, deep and steep-sided valley

□ Answer the following questions.

1. Name some important ranges of the Eastern Highlands.

2. What is Fall Line?

3. Name some minerals found in Canadian Shield region.

4. Why Canadian Shield region is covered with many lakes.

5. Name the five great lakes of Canadian Shield region.

6. Write the importance of the Great Central Plains of North America.

7. How rivers play important role in the development of the economy of North America?

8. What is the difference between Gorge and Canyon?