

# INFORMATIONAL READING COMPREHENSION: Spotlight on Geography: Chile

Read the text below, and then answer the questions.

The South American country of Chile is a land of contrasts and extremes. Chile is a narrow ribbon of land that extends from the dry Atacama Desert in the north to the wet, windswept fjords and glaciers of Tierra del Fuego in the south. One of the longest countries in the world, spanning about 2,700 miles from north to south, Chile is also one of the narrowest, averaging only 110 miles from west to east; its widest point is only about 220 miles.

Chile is a land dominated by both ocean and mountains. All along Chile's western border lies the vast Pacific Ocean. Marking Chile's eastern border with Bolivia and Argentina are the towering, snow-capped peaks of the Andes Mountains. These are the highest mountains outside of Asia. Additionally, there are smaller mountain ranges along the coastline, creating a narrow valley in the center of the country. The interactions of ocean and mountains of varying heights contribute to the variety of geographic regions that can be found in Chile.



The Atacama Desert's extreme aridity is due in part to its location between the Andes and the Chilean Coast mountain ranges, creating a two-sided rain shadow effect.

## The Far North

In Chile's Far North region lies the Atacama Desert, one of the driest places on Earth. In some areas of the desert, no rainfall has ever been recorded. Yet even in this harsh environment, there are oases and lagoons that support desert blooms and waterfowl, including three species of flamingos. This is partly because of the Andean plateau, or Altiplano, a sliver of which lies on the eastern side of the Atacama. In contrast to the dry desert, the rain is plentiful at certain times of year in the plateau region. The water trickles down to the desert, forming temporary oases and fertile river valleys.

## The Near North

Three of Chile's highest mountains lie within Chile's semi-arid Near North region, south of the Atacama Desert. In this rugged, mountainous region, the coastal ranges and the Andes Mountains merge in places, creating narrow valleys running east to west from the Andes to the coast. The Elqui Valley, famous for its vineyards, is just one example of lush green valleys growing next to high, barren desert peaks. The high mountains also help create temperate rain forests along the coast.



Irrigation from the Elqui River and the fertile soil of the valley support the numerous vineyards in the region.

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Continue reading. Then answer the questions on the next page.

**Central Chile**

Unlike the mountains in the Near North, which run east to west, the Andes Mountains and coastal ranges in Central Chile run north to south. These parallel ranges contain the wide Central Valley between them. Temperatures here are relatively mild; the temperate climate is similar to that of much of California and the Mediterranean regions of Europe. Summers are dry and generally hot; winters are cool and rainy. This region is also home to Chile's richest agricultural lands. Because of the mild climate and plentiful food and fresh water, the Central Valley contains the three largest metropolitan areas—including the capital city Santiago—and the majority of the Chilean population.



Santiago lies in a relatively flat basin in the Central region surrounded on all sides by towering mountains.



An Araucaria Tree rises above trees and shrubs by a lake at the foot of Llaima Volcano in Conguillío National Park.

**Southern Zone**

South of Chile's Central Valley lies the Southern Zone of Chile, also known as the Lake District. Because it sits at a lower elevation than the Central Valley, water from hundreds of rivers flowing down from the Andes collects here to form magnificent lakes. This part of Chile, in contrast to the dry Atacama, is one of the rainiest areas in the world. In winter, it can rain for weeks. The land is lush, covered with ferns, wildflowers, and forests. In fact, Conguillío National Park in the Lake District is home to ancient forests of towering Araucaria trees. The Araucaria, more commonly known as the Monkey Puzzle Tree, is the national tree of Chile.



The soaring granite peaks of los Cuernos del Paine, or "the Horns of Paine," are one of the many attractions for tourists in Chile's Patagonia region in the Far South.

**The Far South**

Chile extends all the way to Cape Horn, the headland of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago. In the Far South region of Chile, the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean meet. At Cape Horn, the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans converge. It is generally cold and windy here. This area is a land of tiny islands, fjords, channels, glaciers, and ice fields. It is, literally and figuratively, a long way from the Atacama Desert of Chile's Far North.

# INFORMATIONAL READING COMPREHENSION: Spotlight on Geography: Chile

Answer the questions about "Spotlight on Geography: Chile."

- 1 The author wants to create text features that will support the information in the text. Complete the table in Part A and label the map in Part B using details from the text.

A. Complete the table below with at least two features from each geographic region.

Region	Features
Far North	
Near North	
Central Chile	
Southern Zone	
Far South	

B. Label the map with the following locations.

Santiago      Atacama Desert  
 Tierra del Fuego      Elqui Valley  
 Conguillío National Park

- 2 Write one advantage of presenting the information about Chile's geography in each of the following formats:

Paragraph text: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary table: \_\_\_\_\_

Labeled map: \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 The author states that "Chile is a land of contrasts and extremes." Describe three ways in which the geography of Chile represents great contrasts or extremes. Cite parts of the text in your answer.

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