

CLASS 6 SOCIAL SCIENCE

Chapter 3 – Landforms and Life

Exam-Preparation Notes

1. Chapter Overview

Landforms are the natural features of the Earth's surface. Mountains, plateaus, plains, deserts and coastal regions have different physical conditions. These conditions influence how people live, where they settle, what they grow, and which occupations they practise. At the same time, human beings adapt to and sometimes modify their surroundings.

2. What are Landforms?

Landforms are natural features or shapes found on the Earth's surface. They are formed over long periods by internal forces of the Earth and by external processes such as weathering, erosion and deposition.

Examples of major landforms:

- Mountains
- Plateaus
- Plains
- Deserts
- Coastal regions and islands

3. Mountains

Meaning: Mountains are areas of land that rise considerably above the surrounding land and generally have steep slopes.

Important features:

- High elevation and often steep slopes.
- Climate generally becomes cooler with increasing altitude, although conditions vary.
- Mountain regions may contain forests, grasslands, glaciers or snow-covered peaks.
- Rivers often originate in or around mountain regions.
- Travel and construction can be difficult because of steep and rugged terrain.

Human life: People adapt through activities such as terrace cultivation, animal rearing, forestry and tourism where conditions permit.

4. Plateaus

Meaning: A plateau is a relatively elevated area of land with a broad, fairly level or gently rolling surface.

- Plateaus may have steep edges or slopes.
- Some plateaus are rich in minerals.
- Different plateaus support different types of vegetation and economic activities.

- People may practise farming, animal rearing, mining and other occupations depending on local resources.

5. Plains

Meaning: Plains are broad areas of relatively flat or gently sloping land.

- Plains are generally easier places for building houses, roads and railways.
- Many plains have fertile soils, especially those formed by river deposits.
- Plains can support intensive agriculture in suitable conditions.
- Because of favourable conditions for agriculture, transport and settlement, many densely populated regions are located on plains.

6. Deserts

Meaning: Deserts are regions with very low precipitation. They may be hot or cold.

- Water is often scarce.
- Vegetation is usually limited and adapted to dry conditions.
- People use different methods to obtain and conserve water.
- Livelihoods may include pastoralism, trade, farming where water is available, crafts and tourism, depending on the region.

7. Coastal Regions and Islands

Coastal regions are areas located near seas or oceans. Islands are land areas surrounded by water.

- Fishing and other marine activities may be important.
- Ports can support trade and transportation.
- Tourism may be an important activity in suitable coastal and island areas.
- People may adapt houses, occupations and daily activities to coastal conditions and hazards.

8. Landforms and Human Life

The relationship can be understood through this flow:

Landform	→	Physical conditions	→	Human adaptation
Mountain	→	Steep slopes, altitude	→	Terrace farming, animal rearing, tourism
Plain	→	Flat land, often fertile soils	→	Farming, settlements, transport
Desert	→	Low rainfall, water scarcity	→	Water conservation, pastoralism, suitable farming
Coast	→	Near sea, marine resources	→	Fishing, trade, tourism

9. Adaptation to Different Landforms

Adaptation means adjusting ways of living and working according to surrounding conditions.

- Mountains: terrace cultivation, roads adapted to slopes, animal rearing and tourism in suitable places.
- Plains: large settlements, extensive farming and relatively easy road and railway construction.
- Deserts: careful water management, drought-adapted crops where possible, pastoralism and trade.
- Coasts: fishing, ports, marine trade and tourism where suitable.

10. How Humans Modify Landforms and the Environment

- People build roads, tunnels, dams and settlements.
- Mountain slopes may be terraced for cultivation.
- Land may be altered for agriculture and infrastructure.
- Human activities can bring benefits but may also cause soil erosion, habitat loss, pollution or increased exposure to natural hazards if poorly planned.

11. Important Terms

Term	Meaning
Landform	A natural feature or shape of the Earth's surface.
Mountain	A high area of land, generally with steep slopes.
Plateau	An elevated area with a broad, relatively level or gently rolling surface.
Plain	A broad area of relatively flat or gently sloping land.
Desert	A region receiving very little precipitation.
Terrace farming	Cultivation on step-like fields made on slopes.
Adaptation	Adjustment of people or their activities to environmental conditions.
Pastoralism	A livelihood based mainly on rearing and herding animals.

12. Quick Comparison

Landform	Key feature	Examples of human activities
Mountains	High, steep and rugged	Terrace farming, animal rearing, tourism
Plateaus	Elevated, broad and relatively level	Farming, mining, animal rearing
Plains	Broad and relatively flat	Farming, settlements, transport, industries
Deserts	Very low precipitation	Pastoralism, trade, limited/irrigated farming
Coastal regions	Near seas/oceans	Fishing, ports, trade, tourism

13. Important Exam Questions with Answer Points

Q. Why are plains suitable for large settlements?

Ans. They generally have relatively flat land, easier transportation and construction, and often favourable conditions for agriculture.

Q. Why is terrace farming practised in mountains?

Ans. It creates relatively level fields on slopes, making cultivation possible and helping manage water flow and soil erosion.

Q. How does a desert environment influence people's lives?

Ans. Water scarcity affects settlement, farming and occupations, so people develop ways to conserve water and choose livelihoods suited to dry conditions.

Q. Why are rivers important to human settlements?

Ans. They provide water and support agriculture and other activities; river plains may also have fertile deposited sediments.

Q. How do people adapt to different landforms?

Ans. They change farming methods, houses, transport, occupations and water-use practices according to local physical conditions.

Q. Why can the same landform support different occupations?

Ans. Climate, soil, water, natural resources, accessibility and local economic conditions differ from one region to another.

14. Competency-Based Practice

- A farmer wants to use large machines on a very steep mountain slope. What challenge is he likely to face?

Answer: The steep and uneven terrain can make the movement and operation of large machinery difficult. Terrace farming or smaller-scale methods may be more suitable depending on local conditions.

- A village near a river experiences repeated flooding after new construction. What should planners consider?

Answer: They should consider flood risk, natural drainage and floodplain space, and avoid unsafe construction while improving drainage and other protective measures.

- Two students disagree: one says deserts cannot support human life; the other says people can live there by adapting. Who has the stronger geographical explanation?

Answer: The second statement is more consistent with geography: deserts can support human communities, although water scarcity requires significant adaptation and livelihoods vary by region.

- A plateau contains valuable mineral deposits. How might this affect local occupations?

Answer: Mining and related activities may become important, although agriculture, animal rearing and other livelihoods may also continue depending on the plateau's environment.

15. Flow Chart for Last-Minute Revision

Landforms

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Mountains → steep slopes → terrace farming / animal rearing / tourism

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Plateaus → elevated land → farming / mining / animal rearing

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Plains → flat land → agriculture / settlements / transport

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Deserts → low rainfall → water conservation / pastoralism / suitable farming

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Coasts → sea-related resources → fishing / ports / trade / tourism

16. Remember These Points

- ★ Landforms influence human activities, but they do not determine every aspect of life.
- ★ Physical conditions vary within the same type of landform.
- ★ People adapt their activities to local conditions.
- ★ Development should consider natural hazards and environmental sustainability.
- ★ In competency-based answers, explain the link between a geographical feature and its effect on people.