



Mystery Features of the Americas

Mission: Seven mystery features are hidden on the map. Fly to each set of coordinates to reveal them, then use what you discover to explain how physical features shape life in the Americas.

Big question: What are the major physical features of the Americas, and how do they affect people?

★ Warm-up: Coordinates recall

Quick review.

Latitude or longitude first? ✓ **Latitude.**

Which hemisphere is 15°S, 72°W in? ✓ **Southern and Western.**

Key vocabulary

Isthmus	A narrow strip of land connecting two larger areas.
Mouth (of a river)	Where a river empties into a larger body of water.
Mountain range	A connected chain of mountains.
Cape	A point of land extending into the sea.

1 Box 1

First mysteries

In the simulator: Reveal the first three mystery features.

What did you notice?

2 Box 2

All seven

In the simulator: Reveal all seven features.

What did you notice?

Feature log

Record each feature's name.

Coordinates	Feature
9°N, 80°W	
0°, 50°W	
15°S, 72°W	

3 Box 3

Patterns

What pattern do the Rockies and the Andes share?

- ☐ Both are long mountain chains along the WESTERN side of their continents
☐ Both are in the Eastern Hemisphere ☐ Both are rivers

✓ **Both are long mountain chains along the WESTERN side of their continents**

Panama

Why was a canal built across the Isthmus of Panama?

- ☐ Ships could travel between the Atlantic and Pacific without going around Cape Horn ☐ To water crops
☐ To stop hurricanes

✓ **Ships could travel between the Atlantic and Pacific without going around Cape Horn**

4 Box 4

Feature report

Choose two features and explain how each affects people.

Feature 1

Look for: Names a feature; at least 14 words

Feature 2

Look for: Names a feature; at least 14 words

5 Box 5

Legend: write a mission 🏆 Legend only

Write a new flight mission: give the coordinates of a feature not on this map (look it up or estimate) and describe what the pilot will find.

Look for: a number from the simulator; at least 20 words



Exit ticket: answer the big question in your own words

What are the major physical features of the Americas, and how do they affect people?

Look for: Major features of the Americas include the Rocky Mountains and Andes (long mountain chains in the west), the Mississippi and Amazon rivers, the Great Lakes, the Isthmus of Panama, and Cape Horn. Rivers and lakes are highways for trade; mountains and isthmuses shape travel and climate.



Completion codes

Students see a code like **ABC-I3** when they finish. The first part must match below. The letter is the level (E = Explorer, I = Investigator, L = Legend), and the number at the end is how many stars they earned.

Level	Code starts with
🗺 Explorer	1AW-E
🔍 Investigator	D2N-I
🏆 Legend	1RP-L

**Watch for these misconceptions**

- "Latitude and longitude are the same thing." Latitude = north/south position, longitude = east/west position.
- "Places at the same latitude have the same climate." Elevation, oceans, and currents matter too.
- "South America is directly south of North America." Most of South America is east of Florida.