

WORDS TO UNDERSTAND

arid
basin
climate
domestic
geography
indigenous
irrigation
landform
natural resource
plateau
renewable
sedimentary rock
tributary



Wasatch-Cache National Forest covers 1.3 million acres in northern Utah.

UTAH IS NORTH

Utah is found on a map between 37° and 42° north latitude. Utah is in the North Temperate Climate Zone, which is where most of the world's people live.



UTAH IS HIGH

Most of the state is 3,000 to 7,000 feet above sea level, making it one of the highest states above sea level in the United States. Kings Peak, in the Uinta Mountains, is Utah's **highest** mountain peak at 13,528 feet.



Chapter 1

SETTING THE STAGE

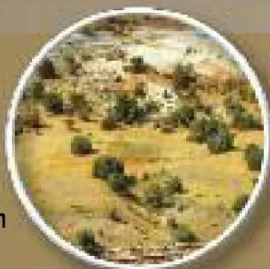
History is the study of human activities over time. Geography, then, is the stage upon which these activities take place.

Our state is a mix of unique geographic and historic features. Crossed and settled by different groups of American Indians, trappers, explorers, and pioneers, our basins, plateaus, and mountain valleys have been someone's home for thousands of years. Today, Utah is a mix of many different groups of people living in a unique place.

Utah's Geography

UTAH IS INLAND

Water vapor from the Pacific Ocean is the state's major source of water, but the ocean is over 800 miles away. Since very little water vapor travels that far inland, Utah is the second driest state in the United States.



UTAH HAS VARIED LANDFORMS

Utah has an amazing variety of landforms. Rugged mountains are dotted with small lakes. Rivers and wind have eroded high plateaus to create deep canyons, delicate arches, and majestic monuments. Flat deserts have a stark beauty all their own.



Geography— the Stage of History

Geography is the study of the earth and its mountains, plateaus, valleys, deserts, rivers, lakes, and oceans. It is also the study of where people and animals live on the earth. What is Utah's land like? Where do Utah's people live? How does our environment help us meet our needs for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, energy, jobs, and our need for beauty and peace of mind? That is the study of Utah's geography.

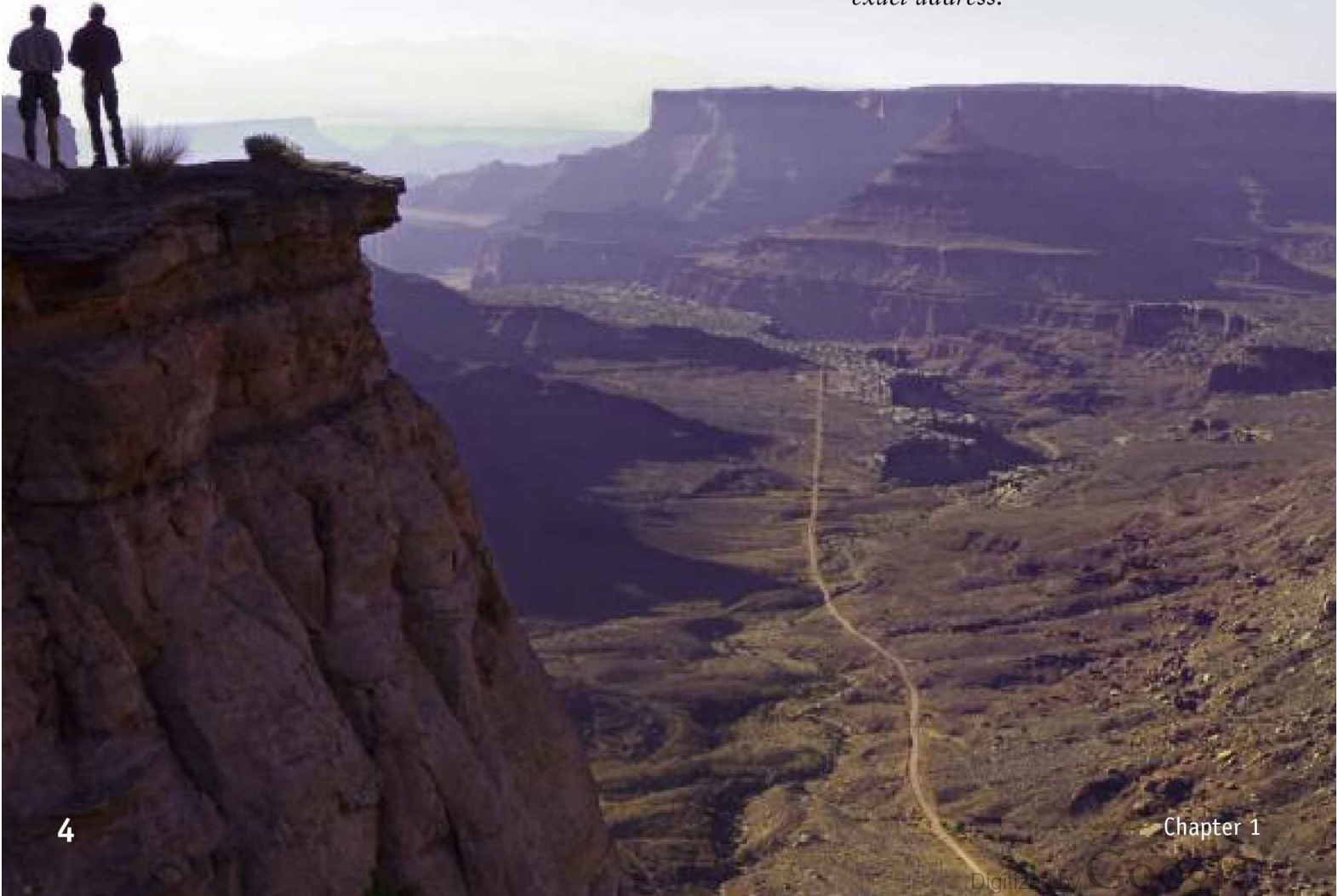
History is an account of what has happened in the past. Both geographers and historians try to learn how the features of a place affect people and events. Why did people come here? Why did they settle where they did? What happened to them once they got here? How did they help make Utah what it is today?

People from all over the world come to experience Utah's geography. What unique features do you notice in this photo?

Location Shows Where We Are

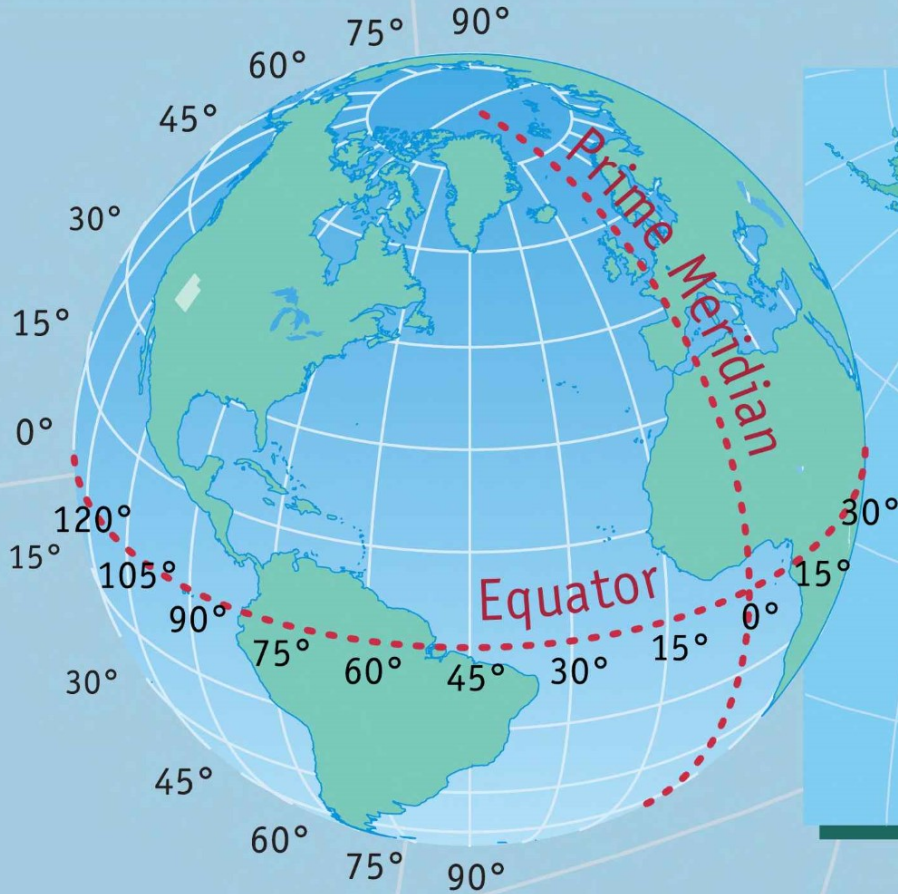
Where did it happen? Both historians and geographers ask this question about any event. Finding out where something happened involves location. The exact location of a place is measured by longitude and latitude. For example, Salt Lake City, our state capital, is 41° north latitude and 112° west longitude. If you live in Logan, Ogden, Sandy, Orem, Provo, Price, Moab, Cedar City, St. George, or any other town, your town would have a different longitude and latitude.

Longitude and latitude are measured north or south of the equator and east or west of the prime meridian. They show the exact location of a place. A street address is also an exact location. There is only one place with that exact address.



Utah's Place in the World

- Is Utah north or south of the equator?
- Is Utah east or west of the prime meridian?
- What continent is Utah on?
- Is Utah in the eastern or western part of the United States?
- Which states surround Utah?



Physical Features and Natural Resources

“Utah is very beautiful. The scenery is majestic because of all the wildlife and plants.”

—Tynan Jakins,
thirteen-year-old boy
from South Africa

“I love living in Utah. There are so many things in Utah I like. There are mountains, animals, and parks.”

—Toby Sorensen,
twelve-year-old
Kane County resident

All places on the earth have physical features that make them different from other places. The physical features of a place include things that are natural to the environment such as mountains, valleys, rivers, and lakes. **Natural resources** such as plants, animals, minerals, and fresh air are also part of the physical features of a place.

People usually live in places where the physical features make life possible and enjoyable. People use the natural resources to meet their needs. For example, for many years the Ute Indians in today's Utah County lived in a region that had long narrow valleys between mountain ranges. Utah Lake and mountain streams provided fresh water. There was tall grass in the valleys and timber in the mountains. Deer, small animals, and fish were abundant.

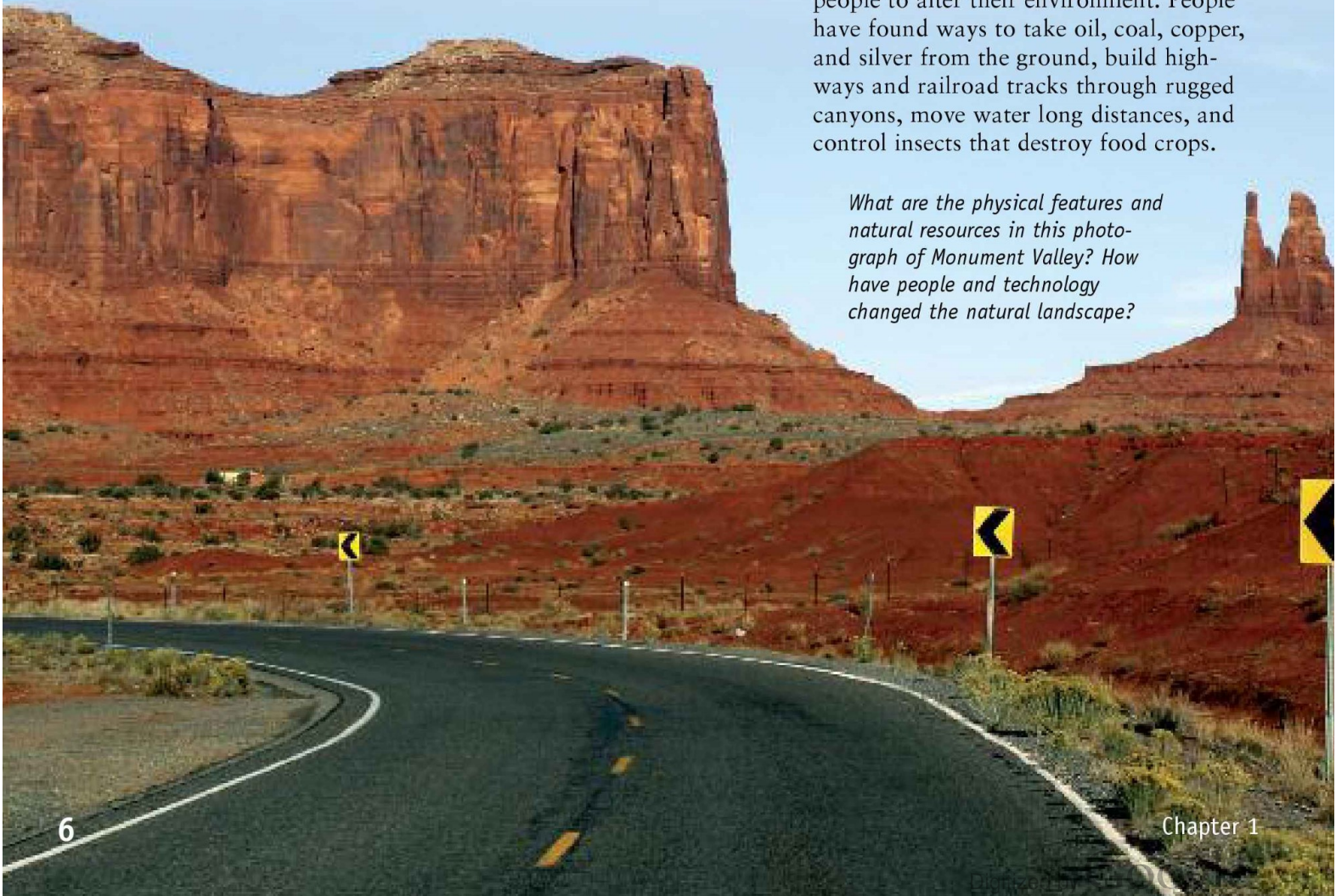
In other places in Utah, there were no high mountains with timber or grassy valleys where wild animals lived. The Paiutes who lived in barren desert regions irrigated crops of corn and beans and hunted only small desert animals such as gophers, rabbits, and prairie dogs. Life was hard for the desert dwellers.

People Use and Change the Land

Later, Utah's pioneers settled in valleys next to mountains. They built adobe and log homes with clay from the ground and trees from the mountains. Because there was not enough rain to water crops, the men dug irrigation ditches to bring water from mountain streams. Their cattle grazed on grasses in the foothills.

People still live where the pioneers settled. Farmers still irrigate crops and raise cattle. However, today's freeways, shopping malls, office buildings, churches, schools, and homes reflect how modern people use natural resources in different ways. Advanced technology has allowed people to alter their environment. People have found ways to take oil, coal, copper, and silver from the ground, build highways and railroad tracks through rugged canyons, move water long distances, and control insects that destroy food crops.

What are the physical features and natural resources in this photograph of Monument Valley? How have people and technology changed the natural landscape?

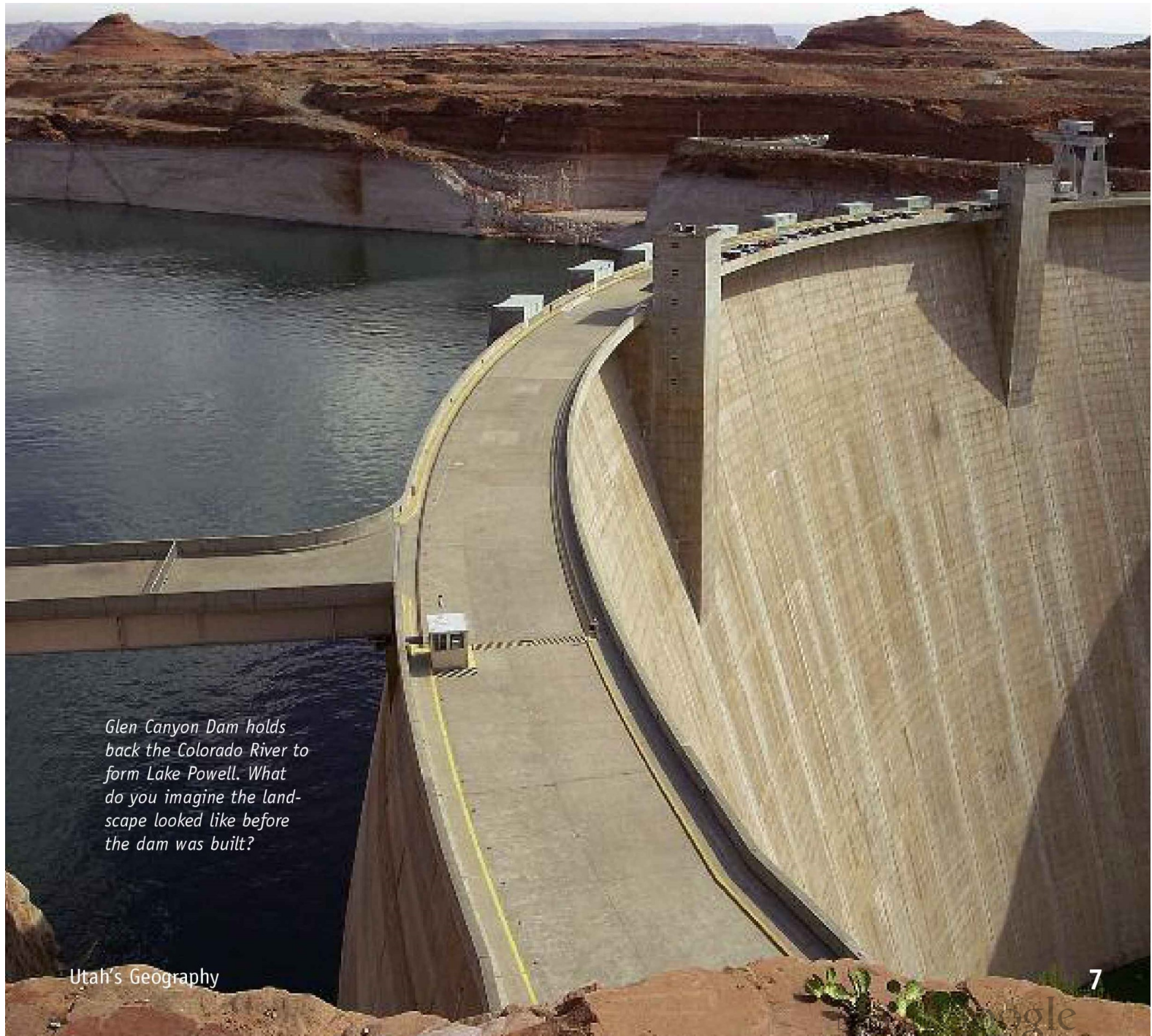


Dams, Electricity, and Flood Control


One of the modern ways people use and change the landscape is by building huge earthen or concrete dams across rivers. Generators inside the dams produce electricity for our electric lights, heat, and air-conditioning. Water backs up behind the dams and forms beautiful lakes that are used for boating, water-skiing, fishing, and lakeside picnics.

Dams back up the Colorado River to form Lake Powell and the Green River to form Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Reservoirs save water for when it is needed. These dams are valuable for flood control. They can release water at a steady flow. In the past, gushing rivers often flooded towns along the rivers.

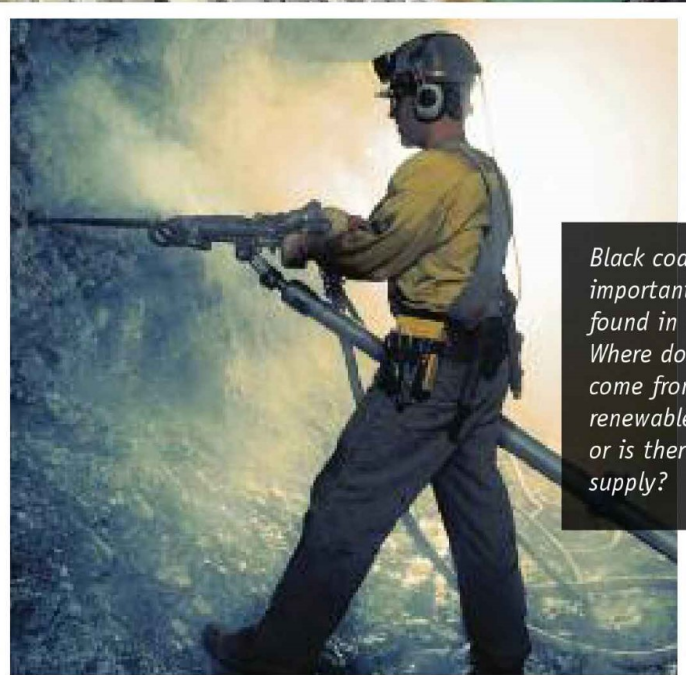
How have people changed the land in and around your community? How have altered landscapes affected people of Utah?



Glen Canyon Dam holds back the Colorado River to form Lake Powell. What do you imagine the landscape looked like before the dam was built?



A view from the air shows how layer upon layer of ore has been dug from the mountain at Kennecott on the west side of the Salt Lake Valley. It is the largest open-pit mine in the world.



Black coal is an important resource found in Utah. Where does coal come from? Is it a renewable resource, or is there a limited supply?

Treasures From the Ground

A treasure is something of value. Utah's land holds unknown quantities of treasures in the form of minerals. The minerals are mined, refined, transported, sold, and made into many products people want.

Renewable and Non-Renewable Resources

Natural resources are important for everyone. Some resources are **renewable**. That means they keep coming back and can be used over and over again. The wind is a renewable resource. So is the sun. Are forests renewable? If you cut down a forest, new trees will grow back, although it will take a very long time.

Other resources are non-renewable. That means that we will probably never have any more than we have now. Coal and oil are examples. Once they are gone from a site, people will have to find new sites or use a different energy source. You will read more about Utah's minerals in Chapter 2.

What do you think?

- Are soil and water renewable or non-renewable resources? What about gravel and building stones? Wild animals? Fresh air?
- How important are these resources?
- What factors are involved in keeping these resources available for our use now and in the future?

Utah's Political and Physical Features



What do you notice about the pattern of our cities and towns? Why are most towns and cities located next to rivers and mountain streams? Did the location of the towns have anything to do with getting water from mountain streams?