

# Themes of Geography

One useful way to think about geography is in terms of major themes or ideas. These pages examine the five major themes of geography and show how they apply to Boston, Massachusetts.

One of the world's best natural ports, Boston has been a center of international shipping for more than 300 years.

## Location

"Where am I?" Your answer is your location. One way to answer is to use absolute location. That means using the coordinates of longitude and latitude (see page A6). For example, if you're in Boston, your absolute location is approximately 42° north latitude and 71° west longitude.

More likely, however, you'll use relative location to answer the question. Relative location describes where an area is in relation to another area. For example, Boston lies in the northeast corner of the United States, next to the Atlantic Ocean.

**THINKING ABOUT GEOGRAPHY** What is the relative location of your school?

## Region

Geographers can't easily study the whole world at one time. So they break the world into regions. A region can be as large as a continent or as small as a neighborhood. A region has certain shared characteristics that set it apart. These characteristics might include political division, climate, language, or religion. Boston is part of the northeast region. It shares a climate—humid continental—with the cities of New York and Philadelphia.

**THINKING ABOUT GEOGRAPHY** What characteristics does your city or town share with nearby cities or towns?

## Place

"What is Boston like?" Place can help you answer this question. Place refers to the physical and human factors that make one area different from another. Physical characteristics are natural features, such as physical setting, plants, animals, and weather.

Human characteristics include cultural diversity and the things people have made—including language, the arts, and architecture. For instance, Boston includes African Americans, as well as people of Irish, Italian, Chinese, and Hispanic ancestry.

**THINKING ABOUT GEOGRAPHY** What physical and human characteristics make where you live unique?



The dragon dance is a holiday tradition in Boston's vibrant Chinatown neighborhood.

