UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHY CHAMPIONSHIPS

2026 United States Geography Championships – Free Response Examination (7th and 8th Grade Division)

General instructions - Respond to each of examination questions in the space provided on the answer document. Only answers written in the appropriate space on the answer document will be marked. Where appropriate, you should write sentences or phrases instead of single words. If a question or section asks for a specific number of reasons or answers, give only the number of answers specified. Please write clearly and legibly.

Section 1 - [20 points]

Use the image in section 1 to complete the following.

1. What date did this earthquake occur? How far below the surface in kilometers was the epicenter? What was the magnitude of this earthquake? What three major tectonic plates are shown on this map? [6 points]

2. Did each of these cities experience severe, very strong, strong, or moderate shaking? [5 points]
Tokyo, Mito, Niigata, Matsudo, Oarai

3. Calculate the distance in kilometers between the epicenter and each of the following points – the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, Tokyo, the point on the map at 38° N 142° E near the epicenter [3 points]

The earthquake occurred at 2:46pm. The first tsunami wave hit the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant at 3:26pm, and a massive second wave hit at 3:36pm.

4. Using the distance you measured between the epicenter and the power plant in question 3, and assuming both waves originated at the epicenter at the same time, what was the average speed of each wave. Write your answer as a decimal rounded to the nearest tenth. Show your work in the space provided. [4 points]

5. In the space provided, briefly explain why a nuclear disaster like Fukushima or Chernobyl can be so dangerous for people living in the area of the plant. [2 points]

Section 2 - [20 points]

Use the image in section 2 to complete the following. This image shows part of a topological map of the Paris Metro and train system with a separate legend showing line numbers and letters of trains. North is the top of the map.

1. Based the map, how many stops would you ride to get from the first station listed in each pair to the second on the Metro line specified? [8 points]
A. Saint-Lazare and Montparnasse Bienvenue on Metro Line 13
B. Montparnasse Bienvenue and Chatelet on Metro Line 4
C. Concorde and Balard on Metro Line 8 D. Madeline and Vaugirard on Metro Line 12

2. Identify the letters of the Paris Trains you would take to head northeast out of the city. Identify the letters of the trains you would take to go northwest. [2 points]

3. Based on the map, does Paris Train C stop at each of the following landmarks? [5 points]
Eiffel Tower, Louvre, Musee d'Orsay, Notre Dame, Pantheon

4. Define the term topological map. Identify THREE important differences between the map Section 1 and this topological map. [5 points]

Section 3 - [15 points]

Use the image in section 3 to complete the following.

1. Which other location in the world has a climate MOST SIMILAR to each of the numbers 1-7 on the map. Use each of the following locations only once. [7 points]

Amazon Rainforest (Brazil)	The Sundarbans (India)	Arabian Desert (Saudi Arabia)	Sicily (Italy)
Okavango Delta (Botswana)	Great Australian Desert	Queensland (Australia)	

2. Briefly define the term megadiverse country. In the space provided and using information from the map, briefly explain TWO reasons why Madagascar is one of the most important megadiverse countries in the world. [4 points]

3. Nigeria has very large oil reserves in the southern part of the country near the Niger River Delta. In the space provided, briefly explain ONE way that having large oil reserves could help the Nigerian people or government and ONE way having large oil reserves could be bad for the Nigerian people or government. [4 points]

Section 4 - [15 points]

Use the image in section 4 to complete the following.

1. Identify by number each of the following on the image – mesa, plateau, pediment, butte [4 points]

2. Briefly describe in the space provided how a mesa differs from a plateau. [2 points]

3. Briefly describe in the space provided how a butte would form from a mesa. [2 points]

4. Barchan or crescent dunes as seen on the illustration are common in desert environments. In the space provided, draw a diagram of a barchan. Indicate and label both the wind direction and the direction the dune will travel with arrows, and also label the slip face. [7 points]

Section 5 - [10 points]

1. In the space provided, discuss how a declining birth rate and lower immigration rates could impact the United States over the next 20 to 50 years. Be as specific as possible in the space provided.