

Reading 5

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The Midwest

The Middle West, or _____, as most people call it, is considered the American _____: it is in the middle of the North American continent. It has no access to any _____, and most of its territory consists of either completely _____ land or gently rolling _____. Altogether, there are 12 Midwestern states: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin east of the Mississippi, and Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas.

Within the region, the most important dividing _____ is the Mississippi: the land west of it was settled later, in the second half of the 19th century, than the Great Lakes area and the valley of the Ohio River. Also, much of the eastern Midwest was transformed by _____ in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: heavy _____ developed in the Great Lakes area, with several big cities like Cleveland in Ohio or Detroit in Michigan, the centre of American car manufacturing. Further west, Chicago emerged as the _____ city of the whole region, because it was in the center of western _____ lines, and now it is the connecting point for _____ traffic crossing the continent.

Today the Chicago metropolitan area is the _____ largest in the country, with close to 9 million inhabitants in 2000.

In general, the states west of the Mississippi remained _____ and agricultural, with no big cities except for St. Louis and Kansas City, both on the Missouri River, which grew large as centers of _____ and the starting point of immigrants planning to move westward. The common joke says that the Midwest has nothing but "cows and _____. Three-fourth of US corn is grown in the so-called Corn Belt, which stretches in an east-west direction from Indiana to eastern Nebraska.

Further north, especially in Minnesota and Wisconsin, where the summer

climate is too _____ for corn, _____ raising and dairy farming are the most common branches of agriculture. The climate of the region is getting drier as one travels westward, therefore on the western edge of the region (Kansas and the Dakotas), the primary _____ is wheat. The Midwest is also very often called "America's _____".

In the American popular imagination, the Midwest is seen as the most characteristically _____ region, where the _____ values of the nation have been preserved. Farmers worked hard, had an independent _____ and treated all other people as _____. These are the principles on which the United States was _____. Although today the great majority of the US lives in big cities or their suburbs, the ideal of a slow, peaceful and healthy rural _____ still has a very positive _____ for many Americans. Perhaps the most famous _____ who immortalized life in a small Midwestern town was Mark Twain, who grew up in the mid-19th century in Hannibal, Missouri, a small town on the Mississippi River. Famous Midwesterners _____ Abraham Lincoln, who was an Illinois Congressman before elected President.