

South Africa from Above (Physical Map)

Remember we learnt in Term One that a physical map shows *physical* features such as rivers, lakes and mountains. Different colours are used on a map to indicate high and low areas.

High places and low places on a physical map in South Africa:

Land, on a map, is shown in a different colour to the sea. The sea is always shown in the colour blue. On a physical map, different heights of land above sea level are also shown in different colours. Green and yellow usually shows the lowest land and orange and brown shows the highest land. The information about the height is given in the map key. Land is measured in meters above sea level, with sea level at 0 meters. High land is often further away from the sea. The highest part of South Africa is in the uKhahlamba – Drakensberg Mountains. This area is over 3300 meters above sea level. Table Mountain in Cape Town is 1087 meters above sea level.

Coastal plains, escarpment, plateaus and mountain ranges

A **coastal plain** is a flat or sloping area of land that is between the sea on one side and a mountain on the other. Coastal plains are found in KwaZulu–Natal, the Western Cape and Eastern Cape. A **plateau** is a large, flat area, high above the level of the sea. Plateaus are found in the inland provinces of Gauteng, North West, The Free State and Mpumalanga in South Africa. An **escarpment** is a steep mountain that is found between low-lying land and high-lying land. The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Mountains form part of the escarpment in South Africa. The uKhahlamba Drakensberg Mountains are between the low lying coastal plain of KwaZulu – Natal and the plateaus of the Free State, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. A **mountain range** is a group or line of mountains with the **mountain peak** being the highest point at the top of the mountain. A **valley** is an area between two mountains or hills.

Classwork Activity:

Study the physical map of South Africa in your textbook on Page 26 then answer the following questions:

1) Use your finger to follow the coastline of South Africa. What do you notice about the height above sea level along the coastline?

2) What is the name of a famous mountain range along the coast (at the Cape)? Why was it given this name?

3) What colour on the map shows land between 2000 and 2500m above sea-level?

4) How high above sea-level is the Highveld plateau?

5) Why is the UKhahlamba-Drakensberg mountains shaded in dark brown?

6) How did the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains get its name?

Rivers

A **river** flows from the mountains to the sea. The place where the river starts is called its source. This is high up in the mountains where the rainfall collects. Rivers end up flowing into the sea. This is called the mouth of the river. Rivers tend to flow very strongly when there is a lot of rain. Some rivers flow all the time. These rivers are shown as blue lines on a map. Others only flow when it has rained and then they dry up when the rainy season stops. These rivers are shown as broken blue lines on a map.

Waterfalls

When water flows very quickly over a steep drop in the riverbed, it is called a **waterfall**. It is a cascade of water falling from a height. Waterfalls are usually found in rivers because the river bottom is not always flat. When there is a steep drop in the river bottom then the water will cascade down very rapidly.

Capes and bays

Capes and bays are found along coastlines. **Capes** are pieces of land that stick out into the sea. **Bays** are found between capes and are u-shaped. The bays are areas where the land is soft and the sea can erode the land away more easily. Capes on the other hand take long to erode because they have hard rock.

River systems – tributaries and catchment areas

When many rivers join together to form a bigger river, all these rivers together are called a **river system**. The rivers that make up the large river are called **tributaries**. Rivers get their water from rain falling into the river. They also get water from the land around the river and this is called the **catchment area**. All rivers have their own catchment areas. When rivers join with other rivers, the size of the catchment area gets bigger. The bigger the catchment area, the more water there will be in a river.

The main rivers of South Africa

The escarpment is the highest and longest range of mountains in South Africa. Most of South Africa's rivers have their source in these mountains. This means that most rivers start in the high mountains of the escarpment. The shorter rivers in South Africa flow from the escarpment east and south wards to the sea.

Examples are the Great Fish River in the Eastern Cape and the Tugela River in Kwazulu Natal. The Limpopo River starts in the Highveld in the North West Province and flows northeast to the Indian Ocean. The Orange/Gariep River flows from the escarpment in Lesotho in a northwest direction, to the Atlantic Ocean. The Vaal River in Gauteng is a tributary of the Orange/Gariep River.

Classwork Activity:

In the space below, draw, colour and label your own diagram explaining a river system. Use the information on page 33 and 34 of your textbook to guide you:

Study the physical map of South Africa in your textbook on Page 26 then answer the following questions:

- 1) What is a waterfall? Give the name of the waterfall along the Gariep/Orange river course? Do research to find out where this waterfall got its name from?

- 2) List four rivers on the map which are also street names in Emmarentia?

- 3) What is a “bay”? List seven bays along the coastline of South Africa?

- 4) Why is Cape Town known as “The Cape”?

- 5) What is the difference between a *cape* and a *peninsula*?

Match Column A with Column B by colouring them in using matching colour pencils or twisties.(You are still using the map on page 26 as a reference):

<u>Column A</u>	<u>Column B</u>
Great Kei River	The smaller of two valleys in the Western Cape that are found between mountain ranges.
Cape Aulghas	Flows into the Indian Ocean.
Highveld	One of the oldest mountain ranges in the world, situated in the North West province and named after Chief Mogale of the region.
Gariiep/Orange River	High lying plateau in the centre of South Africa.
Tugela River	The name of a desert in South Africa.
Magaliesberg Mountains	The geographical southern tip of Africa which separates the Atlantic Ocean & Indian Ocean.
Little Karoo	Found along the west coast next to the cold Atlantic ocean, well-known for its colourful flowers which grow after the winter rainfall.
Great Karoo	Its highest peak is the Thabana Ntlenyana which is 3482m above sea-level.
Olifants River	A 285km long river that flows into the Atlantic Ocean.
Namaqualand	The source of this river is the Stormberge mountains.
Kalahari	A large valley found between the Swartberg and Nuweveldberg mountains.
uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains	The largest river in South Africa, with its main tributary being the Vaal River.