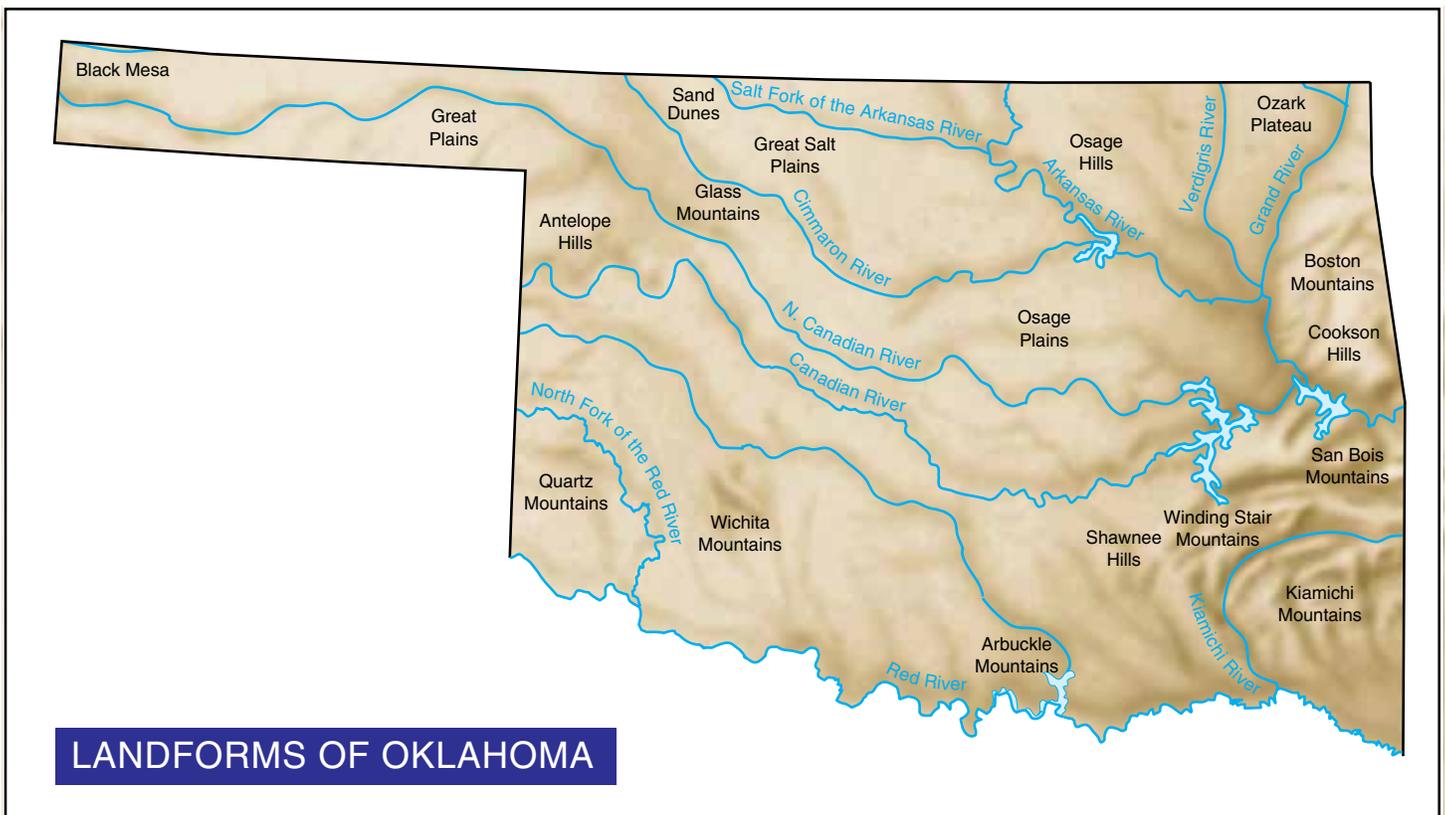


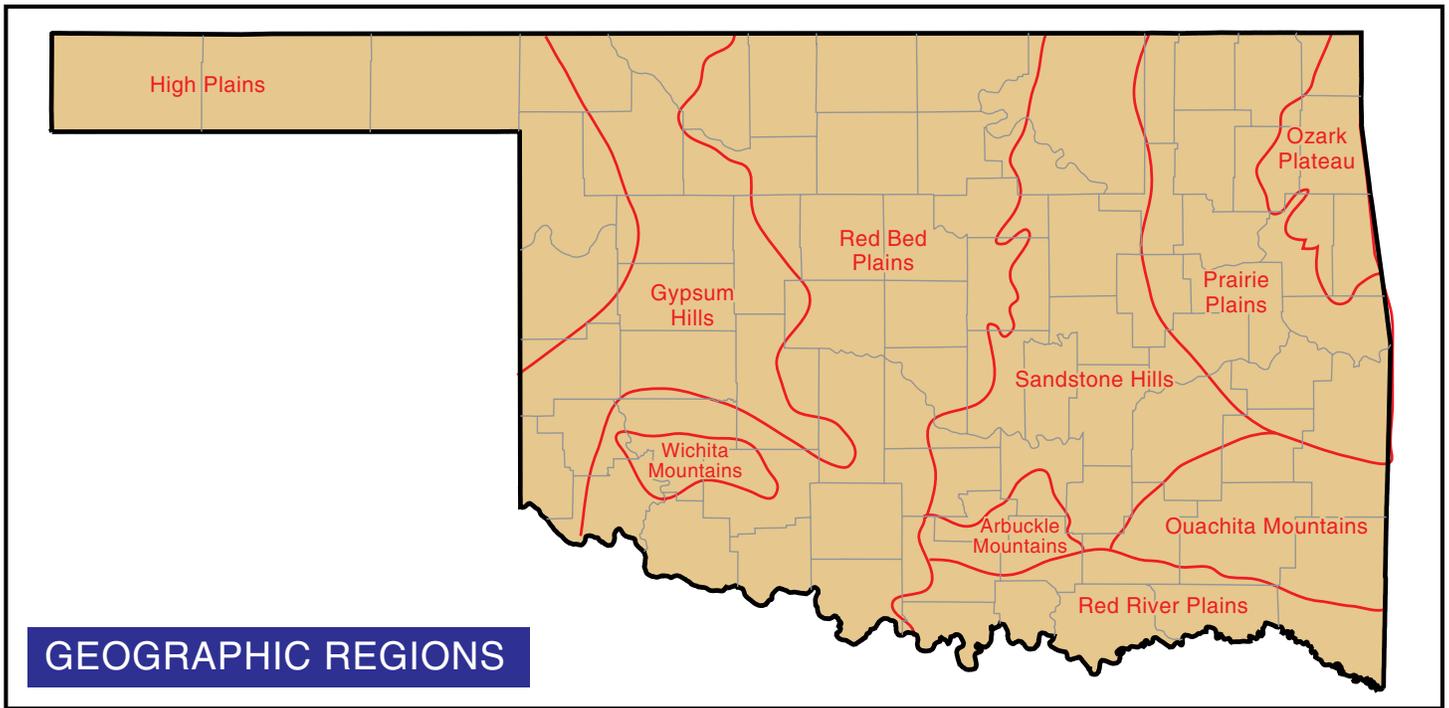
Have you thought about Oklahoma's Climate And Geography?

Oklahoma's geography influences its climate. In the spring, ferocious thunderheads well up over the horizon, usually from the southwest. Thunderstorms and the clash of cold and hot air spawn tornadoes that skip across the land, sometimes causing death and destruction. In July and August, warm moist air from the south brings high humidity along with high summer temperatures. The fall season brings great beauty and temperate weather. Winters vary. Sometimes they are mild, but more often they are cold and damp with cold north winds sweeping down the plains and across the state.

Oklahoma's climatic zones are influenced by a humid belt in the south, a cold climatic belt in the north, a humid belt from the east, and a dry belt from the west. The blending of these climatic conditions produces weather that is usually pleasant but is capable of extremes.

Oklahoma's average temperature is 60 degrees Fahrenheit, but many summer days exceed 100 degrees. Some winter days see tempera-





tures below zero. However, the days of extreme temperatures seldom last long.

The most unpleasant side of Oklahoma's weather lies in the occasional blizzard or the more frequent spring tornadoes. Modern weather warning systems and radio-television media help Oklahomans to observe safety precautions during times of danger.

Wind movement dominates much of Oklahoma's climate. Few days occur when there isn't at least a gentle breeze. The western half of the state, a part of the Great Plains, gets a steady flow of wind movement.

Rainfall varies widely in the state. The northwest, an *arid* part of Oklahoma, averages only eighteen inches of annual rainfall. On the other hand, the southeast gets about fifty-six inches. Some areas of the Panhandle have received less than ten inches in a year. But, in 1949, part of southeastern Oklahoma received nearly seventy inches of rainfall.

Oklahoma's geographic location in the United States causes some difficulty in placing it in a specific region. Some writers place it in the Southwest while others claim its location is in the South or South-central parts. It is situated between $94^{\circ} 29'$ and 103° west longitude and $33^{\circ} 41'$ and 37° north *latitude*. It shares state borders with Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas. The latitudinal location of the state places it between the forests of the East and the grasslands of the West and between the low elevations of the Coastal Plain and the high elevations of the Rocky Mountains. Even the growing season lies between the long growing season of south Texas and the shorter grow-

ing season of the northern states.

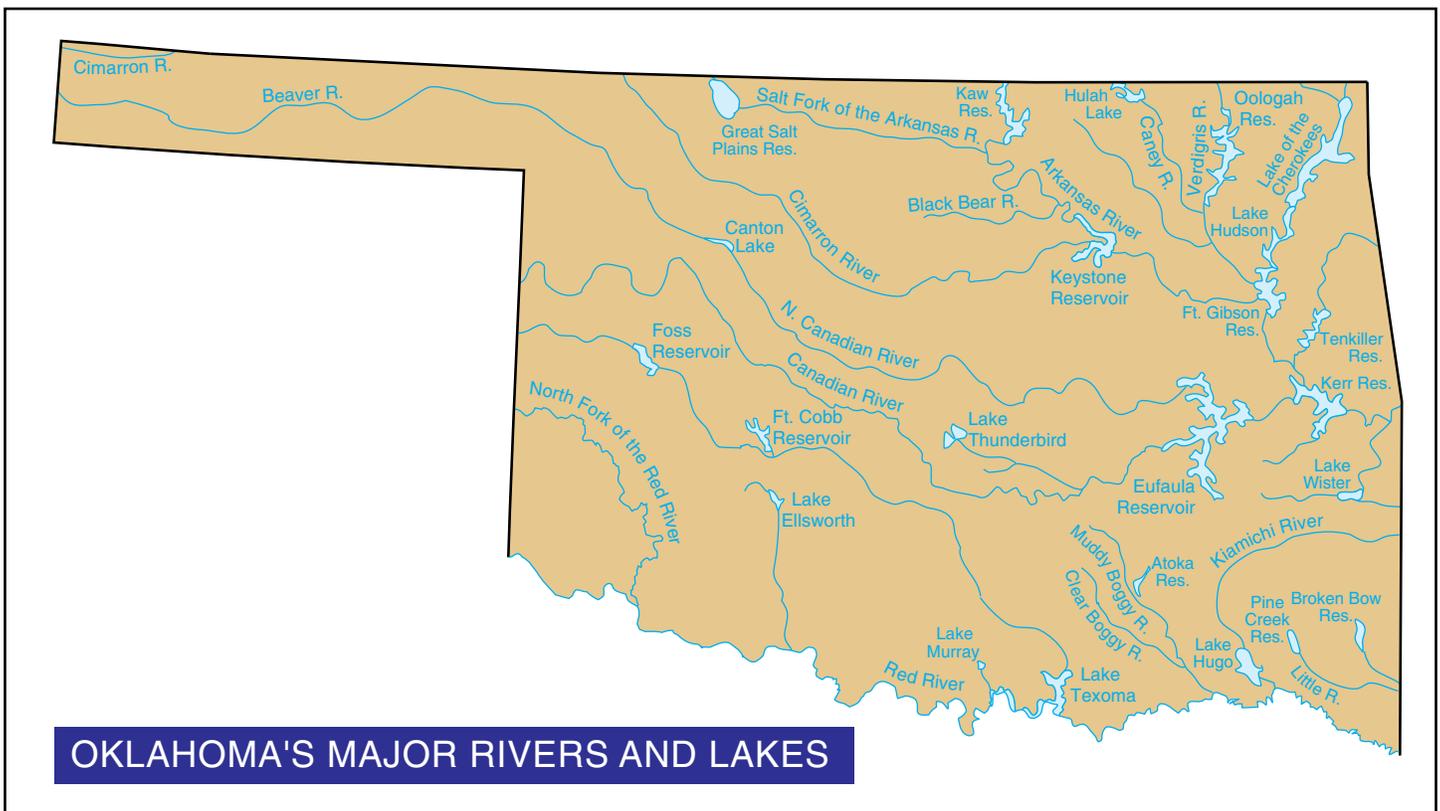
Oklahoma ranks eighteenth in land area in the United States with a total area of 69,919 square miles.

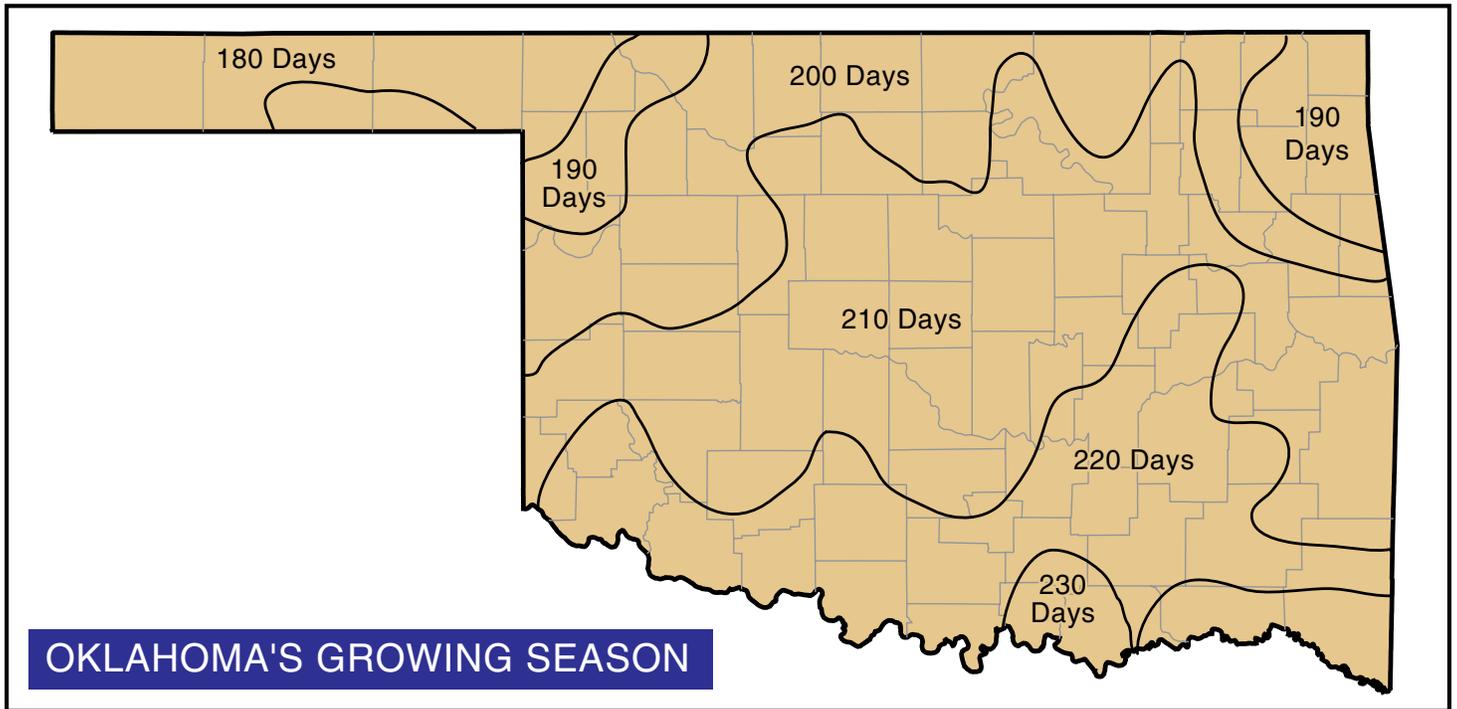
Landforms in Oklahoma are dominated by small ranges of hills and mountains. The Ouachita Mountains are formed by curving ridges made up of the Kiamichi Mountains and Winding Stair Mountain. These mountains have rough, rugged terrain, covered with thick forests. The San Bois Mountains make up the northern part of the Ouachitas.

Western Oklahoma is mostly plains, but small, rocky mountain ranges jut upward from the surrounding prairie lands. The Wichita Mountains and their neighbors, the Quartz Mountains, are landforms in southwestern Oklahoma.

The Arbuckle Mountains lie in south-central Oklahoma. They are the subject of study for *geology* students throughout the south-central and southwestern United States. The Cookson Hills in eastern Oklahoma form a part of the Ozark Plateau of Arkansas and Missouri. The Antelope Hills in western Oklahoma and Black Mesa in northwestern Oklahoma dominate the western plains of the state. The Osage Hills are a part of the Flint Hills of Kansas. The Glass Mountains lie between the North Canadian and the Cimarron Rivers in northwestern Oklahoma.

Of all the mountain ranges, the greatest interest is directed toward the Arbuckles. The Arbuckle Mountains cover a large area in south-cen-





tral Oklahoma, just north of Ardmore. They are of particular interest to geologists because the base materials of which the mountains are made are exposed to the surface. This makes it possible for geologists to see formations that usually are hidden below the surface of the land.

Elevations increase rapidly across Oklahoma. The lowest elevation is found in the Coastal Plains, south of the Ouachita Mountains in the southeastern part of the state. There, the elevation is only 287 feet above sea level. The highest elevation occurs at Black Mesa in the Panhandle. Black Mesa is 4,973 feet above sea level. The capital, Oklahoma City, lies 1,243 feet above sea level. Elevation at the southwestern corner of the state is 1,558 feet. When one looks at the elevation from the southwestern corner to the southeastern corner, it is apparent that the Red River, which forms the state's southern border, falls 1,253 feet as it flows along.

Two of Oklahoma's rivers form the state's major drainage systems. The Arkansas River carries about two-thirds of the state's excess water drainage. The Red River carries the other third of run-off. The Arkansas flows from Colorado and gathers waters from the Cimarron, Verdigris, Illinois, and Grand rivers. Before the Arkansas leaves the state, it gathers water from the Canadian rivers. The Red River begins on the Texas high plains and flows along the southern boundary of the state. It gathers water from the North Fork, Washita, Boggy, Blue, and Kiamichi rivers.

One of Oklahoma's most scenic areas is found south of Davis at

Turner Falls. The falls nestle among the rocks of the Arbuckle Mountains. At seventy-seven feet, Turner Falls is the state's highest and largest waterfall and is a favorite recreational area for people of the state.

Oklahoma's vegetation is as varied as its climate and topography. More than 130 different kinds of trees grow in the state. In the east are oak, pine, maple, sweet gum, hickory, pecan, walnut, sycamore, dogwood, and the state tree, the red bud. One of the most unusual trees in Oklahoma, the cypress, is found at Beavers Bend. In fact, the state's tallest tree was a cypress tree that grew in McCurtain County. It was killed by lightning in 1983. Pine trees grow rapidly in southeastern Oklahoma. Pine trees are harvested, planted, and re-harvested as a major crop in southeastern Oklahoma. In other parts of the state, pecan and cedar are major timber crops, as is oak.

In the western half of the state, cottonwood, elm, willow, cedar, hackberry, and blackjack trees grow along waterways.

One of the most interesting growths of trees historically is the vegetation belt called the Cross Timbers. Trees grew so thickly that early pioneers had to go around the Cross Timbers. They couldn't go through them. The Cross Timbers were between five and thirty miles wide and ran along a line from the central part of the state to the southwest. The Cross Timbers served as a dividing line between the forests of the east and the prairies of the west. The stunted growth of blackjack, post oak, and other kinds of oak, with their wild grape and greenbriar vines, made traveling through them almost impossible.

Wildflowers and grasses cover the land seasonally. Red, yellow, pink, purple, and white blossoms decorate the pastures and highways. The colorful Indian paintbrush and the Indian Blanket, along with Black-eyed Susans, blooming purple thistles, wild roses, sunflowers, and buttercups grow profusely. The Indian Blanket is the state's wild flower.

All of the large lakes in Oklahoma are man-made and serve as reservoirs for towns and cities in the state. The largest natural lake is Lake Roebuck near Grant. The man-made lakes have been created for flood control and for conservation purposes. They also provide recreation and power. They are a valuable source of income from the tourist trade in the state.

By David English



Oklahoma's unique shape makes it easy to locate on a map of the United States.