Every place on Earth has a location. One way to describe the location is by referring to another place. This is called relative location. For example, we might say that Stockton is “near San Francisco” or “about an hour south of Sacramento.” Yet if someone doesn’t know San Francisco or Sacramento, this description means nothing.

Geographers have another more precise way to describe location. They use imaginary lines on a map or globe called latitude and longitude. This is called absolute location. It can pinpoint any location on Earth. For example, we might say that Stockton is 38° N, 121° W. The first number is the latitude and the second is the longitude.

Lines of latitude run from side to side. The equator runs around the middle of the Earth. All lines of latitude run parallel to the equator. They are measured in degrees from 0 to 90. Latitude measures how far north or south of the equator a place is. The equator is 0°, the South Pole is at 90° S, and the North Pole is at 90° N. Above and below the equator, the Earth can be divided into imaginary halves called hemispheres. The upper half is called the Northern Hemisphere, and the lower half the Southern Hemisphere.

Lines of longitude stretch from the North Pole to the South Pole. The prime meridian marks 0°. Longitudinal lines are not parallel. They run like the sections of an orange and come together at both poles. On the opposite side of the Earth from the prime meridian is another line of longitude called the International Date Line, which marks 180°. The lines in between are numbered from 0° to 179° and each is either east or west of the prime meridian. Stockton, for example, is 121° west of the prime meridian.
ABSOLUTE LOCATION Graphic Organizer

On the globe below, label the following:

- equator
- prime meridian
- a line of latitude in the Northern Hemisphere
- a line of longitude west of the prime meridian
- North Pole
- South Pole
Homework: ABSOLUTE LOCATION

Give the absolute location of the points on the map below.

A: _____________
B: _____________
C: _____________
D: _____________
E: _____________
F: _____________
G: _____________
H: _____________
I: _____________
J: _____________

Can you give the absolute location of the North Pole? ______________

Can you give the absolute location of the South Pole? ______________
Give the approximate latitude and longitude of the following California cities.

1. Paradise __________
2. Manteca __________
3. Porterville __________
4. Los Angeles __________