The Geography of Ancient Rome

The geography of an area usually determines the manner in which people live.

Directions: Read through the following paragraphs; then write the answers to the questions.

Italy is a peninsula that is shaped like a boot. It is protected on the north by the Alps. These mountains provided a natural barrier to discourage a serious invasion by barbarians.

The Apennine Mountains, which run north and south, divide the country into two distinct and contrasting sections. On the western half, the countryside is a continuous rich, fertile plain, unlike the eastern half, which is rocky and hilly. Because of the quality of the land, the people who live in the east were usually poor while the people who lived in the west were wealthy and educated.

The best harbors are located on the western side near the southern end of the boot. Because of the location of these harbors, it was logical that commerce was carried on with Spain, Gaul, and Britain. Important metals such as iron, copper, tin, and silver were exported. Building materials, stone and timber, were abundant. A moderate climate with an absence of extreme hot or cold temperatures prevailed. Therefore, Italy had many of the resources required to develop a significant civilization. It is easy to understand why it was so attractive to invaders.

1. How did the weather affect the early settlers in Italy?

2. Describe the difference between the eastern and western sections of the country.

3. Why was the contact with other people made in Spain, Gaul, and Britain?
4. Why would it be difficult to invade Italy from the north?

5. Explain why Italy was attractive to invaders in the Mediterranean area.