8-1 Geography Practice

Japan consists of several thousands of islands, of which Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku are the four largest. Japan's closest neighbors are Korea, Russia and China. The Sea of Japan separates the Asian continent from the Japanese archipelago.

1. Identify the four largest islands of Japan. What body of water separates Japan from the mainland?

Japan's area is comparable to that of Germany or California. Japan's northernmost islands are located on a similar geographical latitude as Milan, Italy or Portland, Oregon while her southernmost islands are on a similar latitude as the Bahamas. More than 50% of the country is mountainous and covered by forests. Japan is politically structured into 8 regions and 47 prefectures.

2. How does Japan compare in area to other governmental bodies in size?

3. **Critical Thinking:** Why would the mountainous terrain be a problem for the Japanese?

Because Japan is located in a region, where several continental plates meet, the country experiences frequent earthquakes. For the same reason, there are many volcanos in Japan. Japan's most famous volcano and highest mountain is Mt.Fuji.

4. Why does Japan experience frequent earthquakes?

Due to the large North South extension of the country, the climate varies strongly in different regions. The climate in most of the major cities, including Tokyo, is temperate to subtropic and consists of four seasons. The winter is mild and the summer is hot and humid. There is a rainy season in early summer, and typhoons hit parts of the country every year during late summer. The climate of the northern island of Hokkaido and the Sea of Japan coast is colder, and snow falls in large amounts. In Okinawa, on the other hand, the mean temperature of January is a warm 17 degrees Celsius.

5. What type of climate do most of the inhabitants of the islands experience?

6. How is the climate of the northern islands different from the southern islands?