

# Ten Essential Features of Book of Mormon Geography

1. A narrow neck (isthmus) separated the land northward from the land southward and was flanked by an east sea and a west sea.
2. Nephite and Lamanite lands occupied at least three times as much western coastline as eastern coastline.
3. The eastern wilderness was much wider and lower than the western wilderness but not nearly as wide as the southern wilderness.
4. The city of Nephi was in a highland valley; Zarahemla was in a large river basin.
5. The river Sidon flowed northward through Zarahemla.
6. The Waters of Mormon was probably a highland lake of significant size.
7. Zarahemla was surrounded by Nephite fortifications.
8. The city of Nephi was three weeks' travel south from Zarahemla and near the Waters of Mormon.
9. The city of Bountiful was north of Zarahemla and near the narrow neck; it was about five days' travel from Moroni and guarded the route to the land northward.
10. Cumorah (also called Ramah) was near the eastern sea, not very far north of Bountiful.

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**Key Scripture** Alma 22:27–33

**Explanation** Many different locations for the setting of the Book of Mormon in the New World have been proposed. While none can be definitively confirmed, some are more probable than others. Archaeologist John Clark has outlined ten essential features that any proposed Nephite geographical location must have in order for it to be consistent with the text of the Book of Mormon. It should be noted that while Nephites do not refer to being located near an isthmus specifically, they do refer to a narrow neck of land that separates the north and south areas (see Alma 22:32). Persons interested in Book of Mormon geography who do not interpret this reference as an isthmus have more difficulty fitting their site to the Book of Mormon than do those who interpret the narrow neck passage as an isthmus. The features listed in this chart are based on the Book of Mormon text.

**Source** John Clark, review of *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, by F. Richard Hauck, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 67–69.