

and other characteristics may greatly influence the layer that forms above it. BARBARA KINGSOLVER

### **beheaded stream**

A captured stream is regarded as “beheaded” when its headwaters are taken over by its captor stream, which at some point broke through the physical division between the two—a natural occurrence in the ongoing dynamic process of a drainage system. The aggressor literally chops off the headwater and diverts the captured stream into its own flow, an act of stream piracy. Some misfit, or underfit, streams begin this way. Without the runoff from its headwaters, such a stream becomes too small to cut through its own valley. GRETTEL EHRLICH

*A hundred miles west and one would be out of the “Bible Belt,” that gospel-haunted strip of American territory in which a man must, if only for business reasons, take his religion with the straightest of faces.*

TRUMAN CAPOTE, *In Cold Blood*

### **belt**

The term belt suggests a region with a distinctive cultural characteristic. Thus: Bible Belt—that area of the South and southern Midwest noted for Christian fundamentalism. Black Belt—often used to refer to a region of rich farmland in the South, but at the turn of the twentieth century African American leader Booker T. Washington popularized the term to distinguish areas in the Deep South where the majority of black Americans resided. (When many African Americans were fleeing to the North to escape the injustices of southern racism and legalized segregation, Washington believed they should remain in the South and construct a separate black nation.) Farm Belt—once called the “breadbasket of the nation,” a vast area of deep, fertile soil spread over parts of fourteen states, mostly in the Midwest, stretching as far north as Minnesota and as far west as the Dakotas, that remains the agricultural center of the United States. Iron Belt—an area generally identified with northern Minnesota and Wisconsin and Michigan’s upper peninsula, which between 1855 and 1900 replaced the East as the nation’s center for the mining of iron ore and the manufacturing of steel after rich iron ore deposits were discovered in the Lake Superior region and neighboring areas. JEFFERY RENARD ALLEN

### **bench**

A terrace, shelf, or platform—usually narrow and relatively level, and backed by a steep grade—that breaks the continuous line of a slope is called a bench. Benches often mark former shorelines, and wave-cut terraces in the flanks of the Wasatch Mountains east of Salt Lake City, Utah, provide a dramatic example of this type of formation. Here, the