

Southwest Asia

Geographic Understanding and
Environmental Issues



Standards

SS7G6 The student will discuss environmental issues across Southwest Asia (Middle East).

a. Explain how water pollution and the unequal distribution of water impacts irrigation and drinking water.

Southwest Asia's Water Issues: Anticipation Guide

Directions: You will make predictions about the answers to the following questions BEFORE learning about this unit. Match the country with the water issue below. *Some countries will be used more than once. AFTER the presentation, you will correct your answers.

A. Iraq	B. Syria	C. Israel	D. Jordan	E. Turkey
F. Saudi Arabia				

1. _____ This country has built over 22 dams with the Anatolia Project.
2. _____ Three decades of warfare have damaged many of this country's water treatment facilities.
3. _____ This country has used advanced technology to build pipelines to carry water throughout the country.
4. _____ Oil spills in the Black Sea have polluted the water supply here.
5. _____ Turkey's dams have decreased this country's water supply by 40%.
6. _____ Citizens can only get water from public sources twice a week in this country.
7. _____ This country has built the world's largest desalination plant.
8. _____ is one of the ten most water scarce countries in the world.
9. _____ Dams in Turkey and Syria have decreased this country's water supply by 80%.
10. _____ This country has been in conflict with Jordan, Syria, & Palestine over water rights to the Jordan River for many years.

Tigris and Euphrates

- The rivers are important because much of the region is desert or semi-desert.
- The Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together in southern Iraq to form one waterway called Shaat al-Arab. This waterway provides water for drinking and farming.
 - The Shaat al-Arab forms the boundary between Kuwait and Iran.



Persian Gulf and Suez Canal

- The Persian Gulf is one of the main ways oil is shipped from the region.
 - Ships must navigate the very narrow Strait of Hormuz which connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea.
- Ships use the Suez Canal as a way of reaching the Mediterranean Sea without having to sail around Africa.



Jordan River

- Although it's a small river, the Jordan River provides water to Israel, Jordan, parts of Syria, and many people living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
- The Jordan River is a boundary between Israel and the West Bank, a small part of Syria, and the country of Jordan.



Geographic Understandings

- The country of Afghanistan is located at the far eastern edge of the region and is landlocked.
 - Landlocked means the country has no sea coast.
- Iran is west of Afghanistan and is able to use both the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea to export and import its goods.
- Iraq is west of Iran and has the luxury of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers running through it.
 - A number of disputes have occurred over access to this waterway.



Geographic Understandings

- Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the region.
 - Uses the Red Sea to transport goods.
- Turkey is located to the north and west of Iraq, and has begun damming the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to save water for its people.
- Israel was created by the United Nations in 1948 as a homeland for the Jewish people around the world.
 - Israel shares a boundary with the Gaza Strip and West Bank, but Israel has invaded this area in recent years because they believe the territory should belong to them.



Geographic Understandings

- Water is a natural resource that is distributed unevenly in Southwest Asia. Since water is in short supply, irrigation must be used to farm.
 - Underground aquifers- layers of underground rock where water runoff from rains and streams are trapped.
 - Fossil water-water that has been underground for centuries.
 - Drip Irrigation-using computers to measure just how much water a plant needs.
 - Desalination-Removing salt from sea water to make it fresh.



Geographic Understandings

- Increased demand for water and for irrigation to expand has led to overuse of rivers and streams.
 - Many farmers have begun to use fertilizers that sink into the water and contaminates it, which affects the water and causes the land to not be farmable.
- Rapidly growing cities has created garbage and sewage problems.
- Increase demand for water has increased conflict between countries that share water systems.



Pollution

- Many countries in Southwest Asia are experiencing the increasing problem of water pollution.
- Farmers have begun using chemical fertilizers that run off from the fields and contaminate water supplies.
 - Chemicals also lead to salt build-up in the soil, which eventually makes farming in those areas impossible.
- Rapid growth of industry in cities and towns has caused garbage and sewage to build up in rivers and streams.



Tigris River Pollution



Enough Water?

- Water availability is a major concern in Southwest Asia.
 - Less than 1% of the world's fresh water is available to the area's inhabitants (5% of the world's population).
- There is simply not enough water available to meet the population's needs.
 - Middle Eastern countries are constantly in conflict over these water problems.



Question Time!

1. True or False: The Persian Gulf is one of the main ways oil is shipped from the region.
2. True or False: The term landlocked means that a country has access to water on two sides.
3. Removing salt from sea water to make it fresh is the process called...
4. This process uses computers to measure just how much water a plant needs...
5. Which river do Syria, Israel, and Jordan share?
6. Which bodies of water are connected by the Suez Canal?
7. Which bodies of water are connected by the Strait of Hormuz?



Oil

- In the 1960s, several Southwest Asian countries came together with other oil rich countries to form the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).
 - OPEC has called for an embargo, or a slowdown or temporary halt, to oil supplies at different times in the past to get political or economic agreements with other countries.



Geographic Understandings

- Two of the most important natural resources found in Southwest Asia are natural gas and oil. 50% of all the worlds oil and natural gas is found in this region.
 - Oil and natural gas bring much needed money into the region.
 - The United States and Europe once controlled oil production in the Middle East, but the individual countries control production today.



Geographic Understandings

- Many people in Southwest Asia practice subsistence agriculture, which is growing small amounts of crops, to take care of local needs.
 - The lack of water affects the amount of crops that can grow.



Geographic Understandings

- Since Southwest Asia is mostly desert, most of the major cities are located on or near the major water systems.
 - Because mountain ranges (such as in Turkey) block the winds from the ocean.
 - The Bedouins (Desert nomads) are one of the small groups of people that have survived by living in the desert as camel and sheep herders.
- Southwest Asia has a hot and dry climate, and it has played a major role in trade between the continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia.



Question Time!!

- What are the two most valuable natural resources in the Middle East?
- How much of the world's oil supply is found in Southwest Asia (Middle East)?
- Why does OPEC play a powerful role in the world economy today?
- Many of the largest cities in Southwest Asia are located on or near what?
- Which describes the climate of much of the Middle East?



Ethnic and Religious Groups

- An ethnic group is a group of people who share cultural ideas and beliefs that have been part of their community for generations.
 - Includes: religion, shared history, types of food, set of traditional stories, beliefs, or celebrations.
- A religious group shares a belief system in a god or gods, with a specific set of rituals and literature.
 - Christianity, Islam, and Judaism were started in this region.



Arabs

- The Arabs of Southwest Asia believe themselves to be descendants from Abraham in the bible, through his son Ishmael Practice Islam and called Muslim.
 - Arabs make up the largest ethnic group in Southwest Asia.
 - Arabs speak Arabic and practice Islam.
- Muslims are divided into Sunni and Shia
 - 85% are Sunni and 15% are Shia

Kurds

- The Kurds are another ethnic group that lives in several different countries in Southwest Asia.
 - They speak their own language called Kurdish, and have a separate history, literature, music, and set of traditions.
 - Many Kurds hope to have a nation of their own someday, which has caused conflicts within the countries of which the people live.
 - Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims.



Judaism

- Judaism is a monotheistic religion, meaning its followers believe in only one God.
 - Traces its origins back to Abraham (one of the first people to profess a belief in a single god)
 - The Torah (first five books in the Hebrew Scripture) says that God made a covenant with Abraham that he would set Abraham as the head of a new nation (later known as Israel) if he would dedicate himself and the Hebrew people to the worship of one God.
 - At a very old age he and his wife Sarah gave birth to a son Isaac; Abraham, Isaac, and his grandson Jacob are seen as the founders of the Hebrew nation. Jacob's twelve sons are viewed as the ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel.



Judaism

- The Hebrews were surrounded by more powerful kings and were forced into slavery around 1300 BC.
 - After many years of torture, they Jews were led out of Egypt by Moses (known as the Exodus). On his Journey to the “promise land” God reveled the 10 Commandments to Moses.
- In 1000 BC the Hebrew people united under a series of Kings.
 - King David established the city of Jerusalem, and King Saul built a temple their in honor of the one god of the Jewish people.
- In 167 BC, the Jews were forced out by the Romans and forced to live in what is called the “Diaspora,” which is the scattering of Jews to the other parts of the world.



Christianity

- Christianity is a religious movement that came out of Judaism.
- The founding figure in Christianity is Jesus.
 - While he followed Jewish law, he began to speak of a more personal relationship with God.
 - His Followers became known as disciples.



Christianity

- Many among the Romans and Jews were becoming worried about the attention Jesus was attracting among the common people, especially, when people started to proclaim he was the long awaited messiah, or savior of men.
 - Jewish leaders accused Jesus of encouraging these feelings and was therefore guilty of crimes against Jewish teachings.
 - As a result, Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion.



Christianity

- After his death, his followers believed that he was able to rise from the dead and walk among them again before going to heaven.
- Many early Christians were put to death by the Romans for not worshiping the Roman Gods.
 - In 313 AD, the Roman Emperor Constantine officially ended the harsh treatment of Christians and made Christianity a religion approved by the Empire.



Islam

- Islam is a religion that began in the city of Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula.
- Muhammad was born in Mecca in 570 AD. At the age of 40, while spending a night in a cave, Muhammad heard the voice of the angel Gabriel, who told him to tell the word of God to the people.
 - Muhammad returned to Mecca to tell the people they needed to rededicate their lives to God. Those that followed were called Muslims.



Islam

- After Muhammad's death, his followers collected the teachings from the angel Gabriel into the Quran (holy book of Islam).
- Muslims believe there is only one God, and they view Muhammad as his final prophet.
 - Much of the Old and New Testaments are also included in the Quran, so Muslims see the Quran as the final and complete word of God.



Islam

- Muslims are expected believe there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet, Pray five times a day facing Mecca, give charity to the poor, eat or drink nothing during daylight during the month of Ramadan, and make the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in there life.



Sunni and Shia split

- After Muhammad's death, there was disagreement about who should lead the Muslim nation.

85% – The Sunni believed that power should go to whoever could keep the community together.

15% – The Shia believed that leadership should go to one of the direct decedents of Muhammad.

- Basically have the same beliefs.



Literacy

- Literacy is the ability to read and write, and it has a big affect on the standard of living. (Pg. 96)
 - Those who cannot read or write have tough time finding decent jobs, and a lack of education forces workers to have unskilled jobs.
 - Generally, the higher the literacy rate, the higher the standard of living.
- Girls have a tougher time going to school than boys, which is a problem that many countries are trying to correct.
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the value of all goods and services produced within a nation in a given year
 - Used to determine standard of living.
 - The higher the GDP, generally the higher standard of living.