



# The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran

## What You Will Learn...

In this chapter you will learn about the Arabian Peninsula, which includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen. You will also learn about the history and people of Iraq and Iran.

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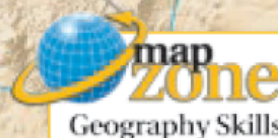
### SECTION 4

**Iran**.....234

## FOCUS ON READING AND WRITING

**Re-Reading** Sometimes a single reading is not enough to fully understand a passage of text. If you feel like you do not fully understand something you have read, it may help to re-read the passage more slowly. See the lesson, **Re-Reading**, on page 676.

**Creating a Geographer's Log** You are a geographer taking a journey of discovery through the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran. As you travel from place to place, create a geographer's log, a written record of what you see on your journey.



## Geography Skills

**Place** The countries of the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran are centered around the Persian Gulf.

1. **Locate** What is the capital of Saudi Arabia?
2. **Analyze** Approximately how many miles would you have to travel from Baghdad to Kuwait City?

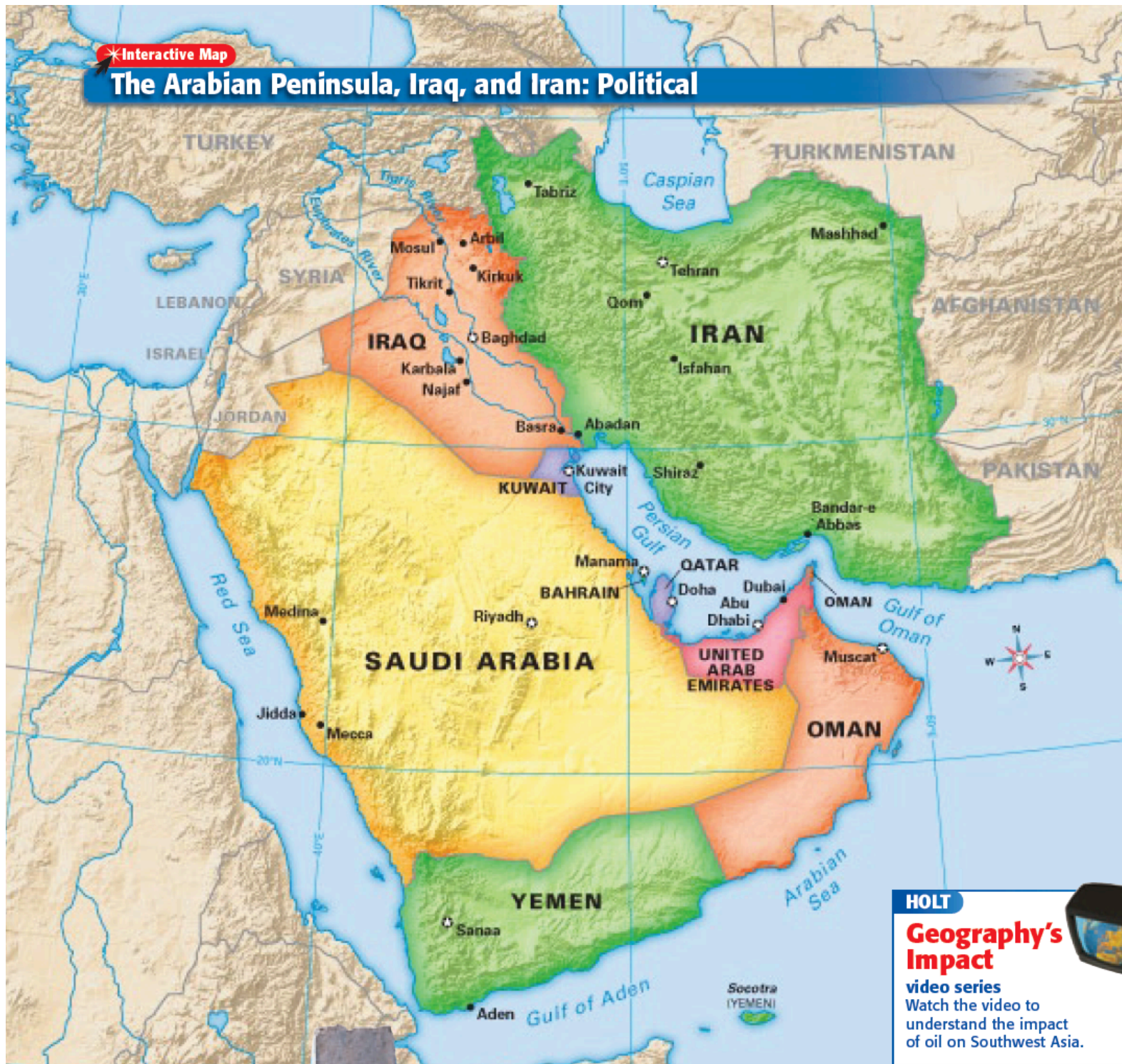
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**Culture** Islam is a major part of the culture in every country in the region. These women pray at a mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.



## The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran: Political

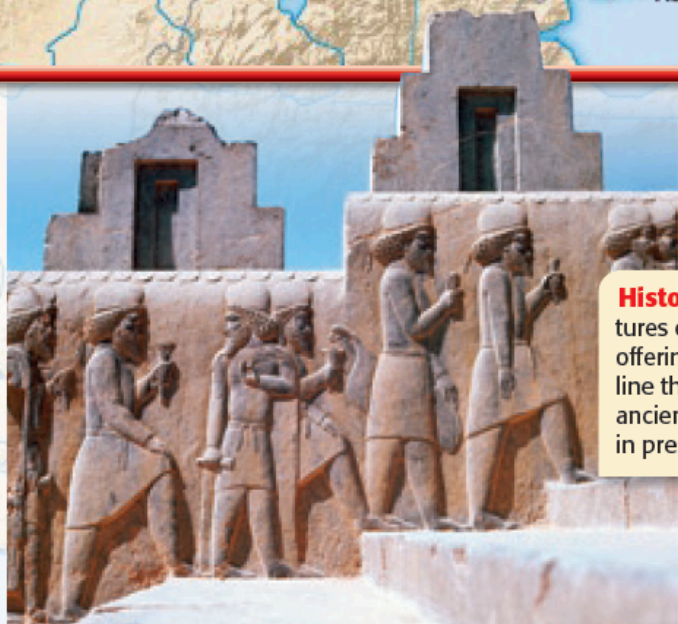


HOLT

### Geography's Impact

video series

Watch the video to understand the impact of oil on Southwest Asia.



**History** Stone sculptures of Persians making offerings to their king line the steps of the ancient city of Persepolis in present-day Iran.

**Geography** Much of the region is covered with huge, sandy deserts.





# Physical Geography

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Major physical features of the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran are desert plains and mountains.
2. The region has a dry climate and little vegetation.
3. Most of the world is dependent on oil, a resource that is exported from this region.

### The Big Idea

The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran make up a mostly desert region with very valuable oil resources.

### Key Terms and Places

Arabian Peninsula, p. 220

Persian Gulf, p. 220

Tigris River, p. 220

Euphrates River, p. 220

oasis, p. 222

wadis, p. 223

fossil water, p. 223

### TAKING NOTES

As you read, use a chart like the one below to help organize your notes on the region's physical geography.

Physical Features	Climate and Vegetation	Resources

## If YOU lived there...

You are in a plane flying over the vast desert areas of the Arabian Peninsula. As you look down, you see some tents of desert nomads around trees of an oasis. Sometimes you can see a truck or a line of camels crossing the dry, rocky terrain. A shiny oil pipeline stretches for miles in the distance.

## What is life like for people in the desert?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** Iran, Iraq, and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula are part of a region sometimes called the "Middle East." This region lies at the intersection of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Much of the region is dry and rugged.

## Physical Features

Did you know that not all deserts are made of sand? The **Arabian Peninsula** has the largest sand desert in the world. But it also has huge expanses of desert covered with bare rock or gravel. These wide desert plains are a common landscape in the region that includes the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran.

The countries of this region appear on the map in sort of a semicircle, with the **Persian Gulf** in the center. The Arabian Peninsula is also bounded by the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the Red Sea. The Caspian Sea borders Iran to the north.

The region contains four main landforms: rivers, plains, plateaus, and mountains. The **Tigris** (TY-gruhs) and **Euphrates** (yooH-FRAY-teez) rivers flow across a low, flat plain in Iraq. They join together before they reach the Persian Gulf. The Tigris and Euphrates are what are known as exotic rivers, or rivers that begin in humid regions and then flow through dry areas. The rivers create a narrow fertile area, which in ancient times was called Mesopotamia, or the "land between the rivers." The Arabian Peninsula has no permanent rivers.

The vast, dry expanse of the Arabian Peninsula is covered by plains in the east. The peninsula's desert plains are covered with sand in the south and volcanic rock in the north. As you can see on the map, the surface of the peninsula rises gradually from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. Near the Red Sea the landscape becomes one of plateaus and mountains, with almost no coastal plain. The highest point on the peninsula is in the mountains of Yemen.

Plateaus and mountains also cover most of Iran. In fact, Iran is one of the world's most mountainous countries. In the west, the land climbs sharply to form the Zagros Mountains. The Elburz Mountains and the Kopet-Dag lie in the north. Historically, this mountainous landscape has kept towns there isolated from each other.

### FOCUS ON READING

After you read this paragraph, re-read it to make sure you understand Iran's landscape.

**READING CHECK Summarizing** What are the major physical features of this area?

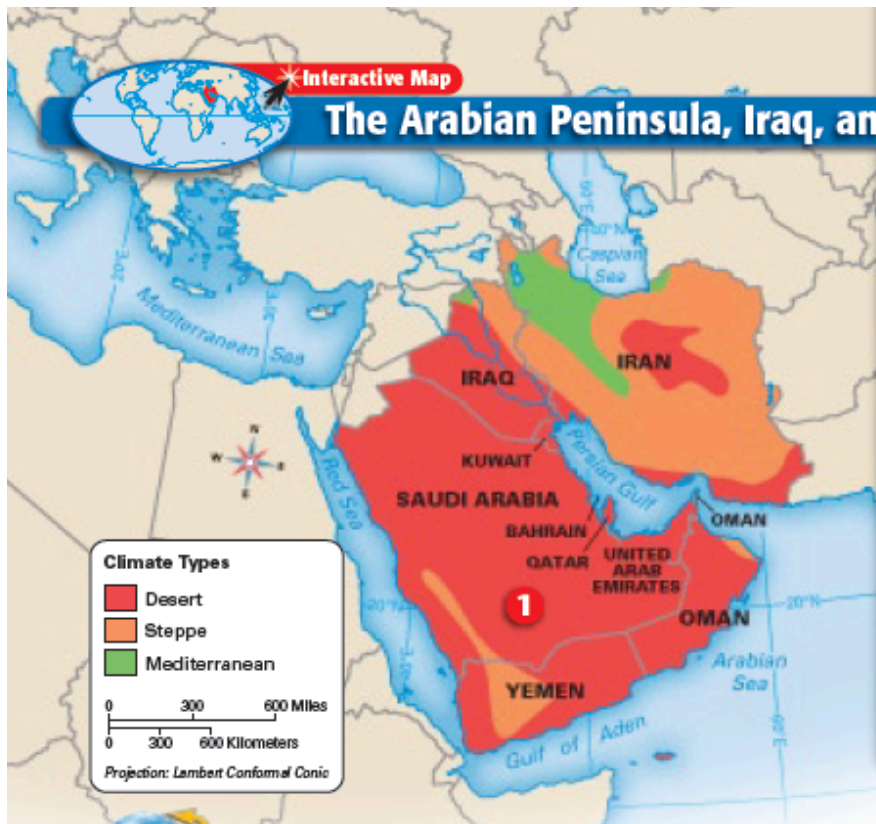


**1** The Elburz Mountains in Iran are the highest land in the region.

**2** The Euphrates River creates a narrow, fertile area in Iraq.



## The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran: Climate



**Regions** Most of this region has a desert climate.

- 1. Identify** Which countries have only desert climates?
- 2. Interpret** Look back at the physical map. How do landforms in the region influence climate?

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## Climate and Vegetation

As you have already read, most of this region has a desert climate. The desert can be both very hot and very cold. In the summer, afternoon temperatures regularly climb to over 100°F (38°C). During the night, however, the temperature may drop quickly. Nighttime temperatures in the winter sometimes dip below freezing.

The world's largest sand desert, the Rub' al-Khali (ROOB ahl-KAH-lee), covers much of southern Saudi Arabia. *Rub' al-Khali* means "Empty Quarter," a name given to the area because there is so little life there. Sand dunes in the desert can rise to 800 feet (245 m) high and stretch for nearly 200 miles! In northern Saudi Arabia is the

An Nafud (ahn nah-FOOD), another large desert. These deserts are among the driest places in the world. The Rub' al-Khali receives an average of less than 4 inches (10 cm) of rainfall each year.

Some plateau and mountain areas do get winter rains or snow. These higher areas generally have semiarid steppe climates. Some mountain peaks receive more than 50 inches (130 cm) of rain per year.

Rainfall supports vegetation in some parts of the region. Trees are common in mountain regions and in scattered desert oases. An **oasis** is a wet, fertile area in a desert that forms where underground water bubbles to the surface. Most desert plants have adapted to survive without much rain. For example, the shrubs and grasses that grow on the region's dry plains have roots that either grow deep or spread out far to capture as much water as possible. Still, some places in the region are too dry or too salty to support any vegetation.

### READING CHECK Finding the Main Idea

What climate dominates this region?

## Resources

Water is one of the region's two most valuable resources. However, this resource is very scarce. In some places in the desert, springs provide water. At other places, water can come from wells dug into **dry streambeds called wadis**. Modern wells can reach water deep underground, but the groundwater in these wells is often fossil water. **Fossil water is water that is not being replaced by rainfall**. Wells that pump fossil water will eventually run dry.

While water is scarce, the region's other important resource, oil, is plentiful. Oil exports bring great wealth to the countries that have oil fields. Most of the oil fields are located near the shores of the Persian Gulf. However, although oil is plentiful now, it cannot be replaced once it is taken from Earth. Too much drilling for oil now may cause problems in the future because most countries of the region are not rich in other resources. Iran is an exception with its many mineral deposits.

**READING CHECK** Summarizing What are the region's important resources?

## Satellite View



Irrigated areas

## Pivot-Irrigated Fields

This satellite image shows how fossil water has converted desert land into farmers' fields. Each circular plot of land has a water source at its center. An irrigation device extends out and pivots around the center.

**Drawing Inferences** Why are the fields circular?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran form a desert region with significant oil resources. Next, you will learn more about the countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

## Section 1 Assessment

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SK7 HP9

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- Describe** Where was Mesopotamia?
  - Explain** Where are the region's mountains?
  - Elaborate** Why do you think the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were so important in history?
- Recall** What parts of the region receive the most rainfall?
  - Explain** How have desert plants adapted to their environment?
- Define** What is fossil water?
  - Make Inferences** How do you think resources in the region influence where people live?
  - Predict** What might happen to the oil-rich countries if their oil was used up or if people found a new energy source to replace oil?

### Critical Thinking

- Comparing and Contrasting** Using your notes and a graphic organizer like the one here, note physical characteristics unique to each area. Then list characteristics shared by all three areas.

Arabian Peninsula	Iraq	Iran
All		

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Describing Physical Geography** Take notes on the physical features, climate and vegetation, and resources that you could record in your log. What would you see and feel if you were in this region?