

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Islamic culture and an economy greatly based on oil influence life in Saudi Arabia.
2. Most other Arabian Peninsula countries are monarchies influenced by Islamic culture and oil resources.

The Big Idea

Most countries of the Arabian Peninsula share three main characteristics: Islamic religion and culture, monarchy as a form of government, and valuable oil resources.

Key Terms

Shia, p. 224

Sunni, p. 224

OPEC, p. 225

TAKING NOTES

As you read, use a chart like the one here to take notes on the countries on the Arabian Peninsula.

Saudi Arabia	
Kuwait	
Bahrain	
Qatar	
United Arab Emirates	
Oman	
Yemen	

The Arabian Peninsula

If YOU lived there...

You are a financial adviser to the ruler of Oman. Your country has been making quite a bit of money from oil exports. However, you worry that your economy is too dependent on oil. You think Oman's leaders should consider expanding the economy. Oman is a small country, but it has beautiful beaches, historic palaces and mosques, and colorful markets.

How would you suggest expanding the economy?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Oman and all the countries of the Arabian Peninsula have valuable oil resources. In addition to oil, these countries share two basic characteristics: Islamic religion and monarchy as a form of government. The largest country, and the one with the most influence in the region, is Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is by far the largest of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. It is also a major religious and cultural center and has one of the region's strongest economies.

People and Customs

Nearly all Saudis are Arabs and speak Arabic. Their culture is strongly influenced by Islam, a religion founded in Saudi Arabia by Muhammad. Islam is based on submitting to God and on messages Muslims believe God gave to Muhammad. These messages are written in the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam.

Nearly all Saudis follow one of two main branches of Islam. **Shia** Muslims believe that true interpretation of Islamic teaching can only come from certain religious and political leaders called imams. **Sunni** Muslims believe in the ability of the majority of the community to interpret Islamic teachings. About 85 percent of Saudi Muslims are Sunni.

CONNECTING TO Math

Muslim Contributions to Math

During the early centuries of the Middle Ages, European art, literature, and science declined. However, during this same period, Muslim scholars made important advances in literature, art, medicine, and mathematics.

Our familiar system of numerals, which we call Arabic, was first created in India. However, it was Muslim thinkers who introduced that system to Europe. They also developed algebra and made advances in geometry. Muslims used math to advance the study of astronomy and physics. Muslim geographers calculated distances between cities, longitudes and latitudes, and the direction from one city to another. Muslim scientists even defined ratios and used mathematics to explain the appearance of rainbows.

Drawing Inferences Why do we need math to study geography?



Islam influences Saudi Arabia's culture in many ways. For example, in part because Islam requires modesty, Saudi clothing keeps arms and legs covered. Men usually wear a long, loose shirt. They often wear a cotton headdress held in place with a cord. Saudi women traditionally wear a black cloak and veil in public, although some now wear Western-style clothing.

Saudi laws and customs limit women's activities. For example, a woman rarely appears in public without her husband or a male relative. Also, women are not allowed to drive cars. However, women can own and run businesses in Saudi Arabia.

Government and Economy

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy. Members of the Saud family have ruled Saudi Arabia since 1932. Most government officials are relatives of the king. The king may ask members of his family, Islamic scholars, and tribal leaders for advice on decisions.

The country has no elected legislature. Local officials are elected, but only men are allowed to vote.

Saudi Arabia's economy is based on oil. In fact, Saudi Arabia has the world's largest reserves, or supplies, of oil and is the world's leading exporter of oil. Because it controls so much oil, Saudi Arabia is an influential member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. **OPEC is an international organization whose members work to influence the price of oil on world markets by controlling the supply.**

Oil has brought wealth to Saudi Arabia. The country has a sizable middle class, and the government provides free health care and education to its citizens. Even so, Saudi Arabia faces economic challenges. For example, it must import much of its food because freshwater needed for farming is scarce. The country uses desalination plants to remove salt from seawater, but this requires an extremely expensive procedure.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

procedure a series of steps taken to accomplish a task

FOCUS ON READING

After you read this paragraph, re-read it to make sure you understand Saudi Arabia's economic challenges.

Another economic challenge for Saudi Arabia is its high unemployment rate. One reason for the lack of jobs is the high population growth rate. More than 40 percent of Saudis are younger than 15. Another reason for unemployment is that many young Saudis choose to study religion instead of the technical subjects their economy requires.

READING CHECK Finding Main Ideas What religion influences Saudi Arabia's culture?

Other Countries of the Arabian Peninsula

Saudi Arabia shares the Arabian Peninsula with six smaller countries. Like Saudi Arabia, these countries are all influenced by Islam. Also like Saudi Arabia, most have monarchies and economies based on oil.

Kuwait

Oil was discovered in Kuwait in the 1930s. Since then it has made Kuwait very rich. In 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait to try to control its oil, starting the Persian Gulf War. The

United States and other countries defeated Iraq, but the war caused major destruction to Kuwait's oil fields.

Although Kuwait's government is dominated by a royal family, the country did elect a legislature in 1992. Only men from certain families—less than 15 percent of Kuwait's population—had the right to vote in these elections. However, Kuwait recently gave women the right to vote.

Bahrain and Qatar

Bahrain is a group of islands in the Persian Gulf. It is a monarchy with a legislature. Bahrain is a rich country. Most people there live well in big, modern cities. Oil made Bahrain wealthy, but in the 1990s the country began to run out of oil. Now banking and tourism are major industries.

Qatar occupies a small peninsula in the Persian Gulf. Like Bahrain, Qatar is ruled by a powerful monarch. In 2003 men and women in Qatar voted to approve a new constitution that would give more power to elected officials. Qatar is a wealthy country. Its economy relies on its oil and natural gas.

Oil Wealth



Big, modern cities such as Dubai, UAE, were built with money from oil exports. Many people in the region's cities can afford to buy luxury items.

ANALYZING VISUALS What kind of luxury items is this man selling?

The United Arab Emirates

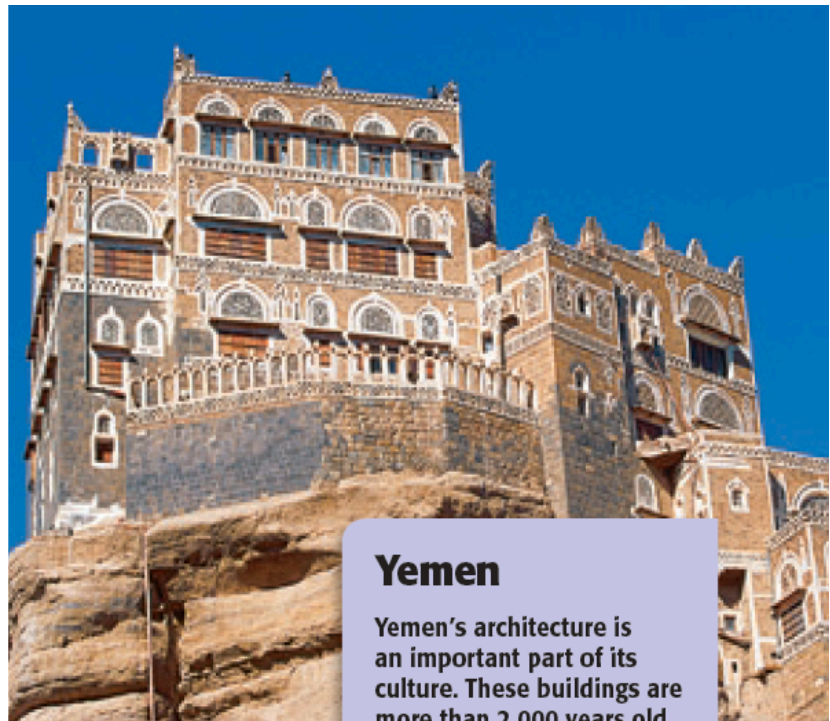
The United Arab Emirates, or UAE, consists of seven tiny kingdoms. Profits from oil and natural gas have created a modern, comfortable lifestyle for the people of the UAE. Partly because it is so small, the UAE depends on foreign workers. In fact, it has more foreign workers than citizens.

Oman and Yemen

Oman covers most of the southeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Oman's economy is also based on oil. However, Oman does not have the great oil wealth of Kuwait or the UAE. Therefore, the government is attempting to develop new industries.

Yemen is located on the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula. The country has an elected government, but it has suffered from corruption. Oil was not discovered in Yemen until the 1980s. Oil and coffee generate much of the national income, but Yemen is still the poorest country on the Arabian Peninsula.

READING CHECK Summarizing How has oil affected the countries of the Arabian Peninsula?



Yemen

Yemen's architecture is an important part of its culture. These buildings are more than 2,000 years old.

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW Islam is a major influence on the people and culture of Saudi Arabia and the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula. The other major influence in the region is oil. Oil has brought wealth to most countries on the peninsula. In the next section you will learn about Iraq, a neighboring country with similar influences.

Section 2 Assessment

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SK7 HP9

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Define** What is **OPEC**?
b. Compare and Contrast How are **Sunni** and **Shia** Muslims similar, and how are they different from each other?
c. Elaborate What do you think Saudi Arabia would be like if it did not have such huge oil reserves?
- a. Identify** What resource is the most important to the economies of countries on the Arabian Peninsula?
b. Analyze How does its small size affect the United Arab Emirates?
c. Predict How might Yemen change now that oil is a major part of its economy?

Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Look at your notes on the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. Then copy the graphic organizer here and for each topic, write a one-sentence summary about the region.

	Summary
Culture	
Government	
Economy	

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Writing about the Arabian Peninsula** If you were traveling through these lands, what would you see or experience? Write some notes in your journal.

