

# Iraq

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Iraq's history includes rule by many conquerors and cultures, as well as recent wars.
2. Most of Iraq's people are Arabs, and Iraqi culture includes the religion of Islam.
3. Iraq today must rebuild its government and economy, which have suffered from years of conflict.

### The Big Idea

Iraq, a country with a rich culture and natural resources, faces the challenge of rebuilding after years of conflict.

## Key Terms and Places

embargo, p. 231

Baghdad, p. 233

### TAKING NOTES

Draw two boxes like the ones below. As you read, fill in the box on the left with your notes on Iraq's history. In the box on the right, take notes on Iraq today.

Iraq's History  
and Culture

Iraq Today



## If YOU lived there...

You are a student in a school in Iraq's capital, Baghdad. During the war, your school and its library were badly damaged. Since then, you and your friends have had few books to read. Now your teachers and others are organizing a project to rebuild your library. They want to include books from all countries of the world as well as computers so students can use the Internet.

## What would you like to have in the new library?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** In spite of its generally harsh climate, the area that is now Iraq was one of the ancient cradles of civilization. Mesopotamia—the “land between the rivers”—was part of the “Fertile Crescent.” Thousands of years ago, people there developed farming, domesticated animals, and organized governments.

## History

Did you know that the world's first civilization was located in Iraq? Thousands of years ago people known as Sumerians settled in Mesopotamia—a region that is part of Iraq today. The country's recent history includes wars and a corrupt leader.

## Early Civilization

Throughout Mesopotamia's history, different cultures and empires conquered the region. As you can see on the map on the next page, the Sumerians settled in southern Mesopotamia. By about 3000 BC, the Sumerians built the world's first known cities there. The Persians then conquered Mesopotamia in the 500s BC. By 331 BC Alexander the Great made it part of his empire. In the AD 600s Arabs conquered Mesopotamia, and the people gradually converted to Islam.

In the 1500s Mesopotamia became part of the Ottoman Empire. During World War I Great Britain took over the region. The British set up the kingdom of Iraq in 1932 and placed a pro-British ruler in power. In the 1950s a group of Iraqi army officers overthrew this government.

## Saddam Takes Power

In 1968, after several more changes in Iraq's government, the Baath (BAATH) Party took power. In 1979, a Baath leader named Saddam Hussein became Iraq's president. Saddam Hussein was a harsh ruler. He controlled Iraq's media, restricted personal freedoms, and killed an unknown number of political enemies.

## Invasions of Iran and Kuwait

Under Saddam's leadership, Iraq invaded Iran in 1980. The Iranians fought back, and the Iran-Iraq War dragged on until 1988. Both countries' economies were seriously damaged, and many people died.

In 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait, Iraq's oil-rich neighbor to the south. This event shocked and worried many world leaders. They were concerned that Iraq might gain control of the region's oil. In addition, they worried about Iraq's supply of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

## War and Its Effects

In 1991, an alliance of countries led by the United States forced the Iraqis out of Kuwait. This six week event was called the Persian Gulf War. Saddam, who remained in power after the war, would not accept all the United Nations' (UN) terms for peace. In response, the UN placed an **embargo, or limit on trade**, on Iraq. As a result, Iraq's economy suffered.

Soon after the fighting ended, Saddam faced two rebellions from Shia Muslims and Kurds. He brutally put down these uprisings. In response, the UN forced Iraq to end all military activity. The UN also required that Iraq allow inspectors into the country. They wanted to make sure that Saddam had destroyed the weapons of mass destruction. Iraq later refused to cooperate completely with the UN.

Ten years after the Persian Gulf War, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to new tensions between the United States and Iraq. U.S. government officials believed that Iraq aided terrorists. In March 2003, President George W. Bush, ordered U.S. forces to attack Iraqi targets. Within a few weeks the Iraqi army was defeated and Saddam's government was crushed. Saddam went into hiding. Eight months later, U.S. soldiers found Saddam hiding in an underground hole in rural Iraq. Saddam was arrested for his crimes.

**READING CHECK Summarizing** What are some key events in Iraq's history?



## Mesopotamia and Sumer



### Geography Skills

- Place** Around 3000 BC Sumerians settled in Mesopotamia.
- 1. Locate** On what river was the city of Ur located?
  - 2. Explain** Why would people settle near two major rivers?



## Iraq Today

With the help of the United States, Iraqis are hopeful that they can rebuild their country.

**ANALYZING VISUALS** How is the United States helping Iraq's people today?



During Iraq's first democratic elections, an Iraqi woman shows her ink-stained finger that she used to vote.



Iraqi boys enjoy their summer at soccer camp in Baghdad.



A U.S. soldier passes out school supplies to Iraqi schoolchildren.

## People and Culture

Iraq is about the size of California, with a population of about 26 million. Most Iraqis live in cities. Ethnic identity, religion, and food are all important elements of Iraqi culture.

### Ethnic Groups

Most of Iraq's people belong to two major ethnic groups—Arabs and Kurds. Arabs are the largest group and make up more than 75 percent of Iraq's population. Iraqi Arabs

speak the country's official language, Arabic. The smaller group, the Kurds, make up some 15 to 20 percent of the population. The Kurds are mostly farmers and live in a large region of northern Iraq. Most Iraqi Kurds speak Kurdish in addition to Arabic.

### Religion

Like ethnic identity, religion plays a large role in the lives of most Iraqis. Nearly all Iraqis, both Arab and Kurdish, are Muslim. Within Iraq, the two different branches

of Islam—Shia and Sunni—are practiced. About 60 percent of Iraqis are Shia and live in the south. Some 35 percent of Iraqis are Sunnis and live in the north.

**READING CHECK** **Summarizing** What ethnic groups do most Iraqis belong to?

## Iraq Today

After years of war, Iraq is slowly rebuilding. Signs of progress include a new government and a recovering economy.

### Rebuilding Baghdad

Iraq's capital, **Baghdad**, was severely damaged in the recent war. Baghdad's 6 million people suffered from a lack of electricity and running water, both of which were lost during the war. U.S. military and private contractors helped the Iraqis restore electricity and water throughout the city. They have also helped the Iraqis rebuild homes, businesses, and schools.

### Government and Economy

In January 2005 Iraqis participated in democracy for the first time ever. Millions of Iraqis went to the polls to elect members to the National Assembly. One of the assembly members' main tasks was to draft Iraq's new constitution.

As Iraqis create a new government, they are also trying to recover their once strong economy. In the 1970s Iraq was the world's second-largest oil exporter. Time will tell if Iraq can again be a major oil producer.

Oil isn't Iraq's only resource. From earliest times, Iraq's wide plains and fertile soils have produced many food crops. Irrigation from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers allows farmers to grow barley, cotton, and rice.

After decades of a harsh government and wars, Iraq's future remains uncertain. Rebuilding schools, hospitals, roads, and

making other improvements may take years. Even with help from the United States, Iraq faces an even bigger challenge of creating a free and prosperous society.

**READING CHECK** **Drawing Conclusions** What happened to Iraq's oil industry?

## FOCUS ON READING

Do you understand everything you just read? If not, try re-reading the paragraphs that you do not understand.

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** In this section, you have learned about Iraq's ancient history, rich culture, and the progress made toward a new government and economy. Next, you will learn about Iran, which also has an ancient history but has a much different culture, government, and economy.

## Section 3 Assessment

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**Online Quiz**

KEYWORD: SK7 HP9

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Recall** Where was the world's first civilization located?

**b. Sequence** What events led to the **embargo** on Iraq by the United Nations?
- a. Identify** What are two major ethnic groups in Iraq?

**b. Contrast** What is one difference between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims?
- a. Describe** How was **Baghdad** damaged by war?

**b. Draw Conclusions** What natural resource may help Iraq's economy recover?

**c. Predict** What kind of country do you think Iraq will be in five years?

### Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Use your notes on Iraq today to fill in this table by summarizing what you have learned about Baghdad and Iraq's government and economy.

Baghdad	Government	Economy

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Writing about Iraq** Add details about Iraq's people, culture, and the country today to your notes. What sights have you seen that you might record in your log?