

# 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



7.3.4, 7.3.6

## 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.

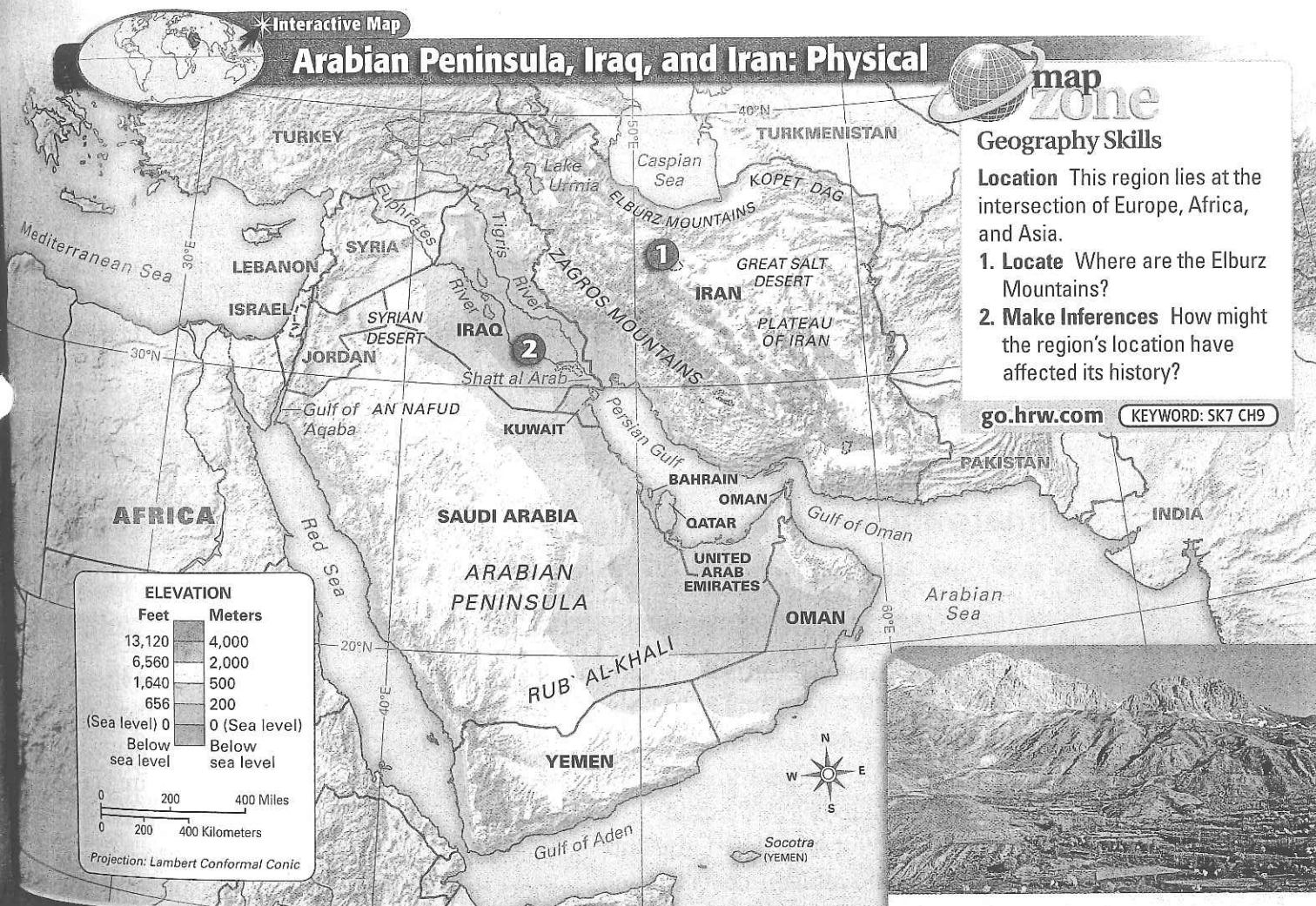
The vast, dry expanse of the Arabian Peninsula is covered by plains in the east. The peninsula's desert plains are covered with sand in the south and volcanic rock in the north. As you can see on the map, the surface of the peninsula rises gradually from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. Near the Red 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?

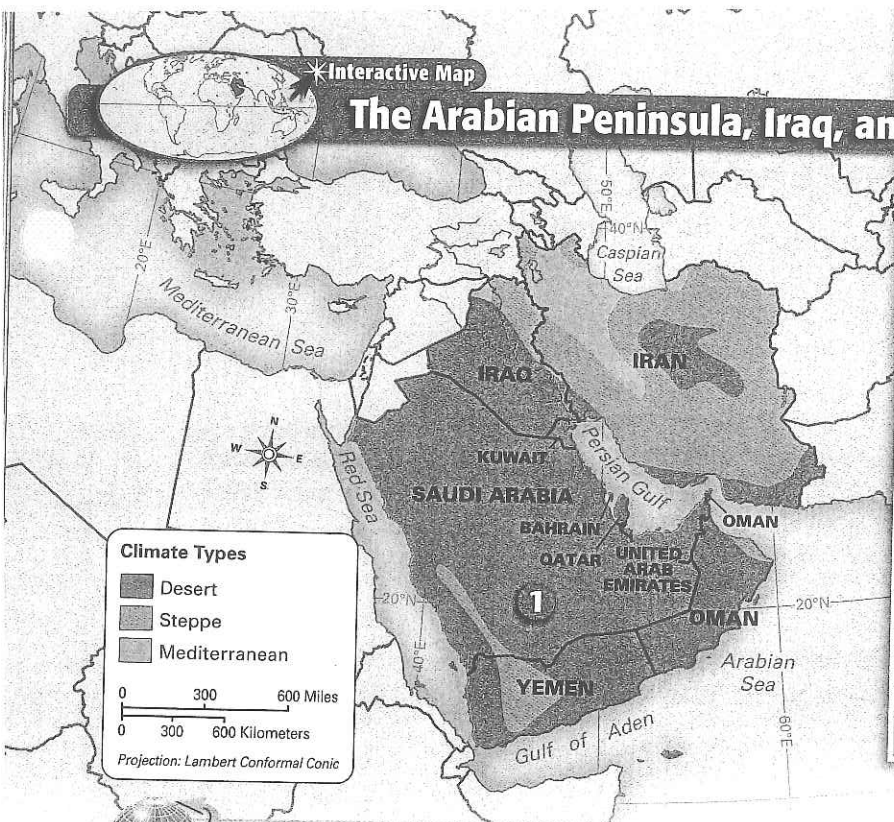


**1** The Elburz Mountains in Iran are the highest land in the region.

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



# The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran: Climate



## Climate Types

- Desert
- Steppe
- Mediterranean

0 300 600 Miles  
0 300 600 Kilometers

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic

1 Sand dunes in the Rub' al-Khali are constantly shifting as the wind blows.



## Geography Skills

**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?

go.hrw.com KEYWORD: SK7 CH9

## 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?

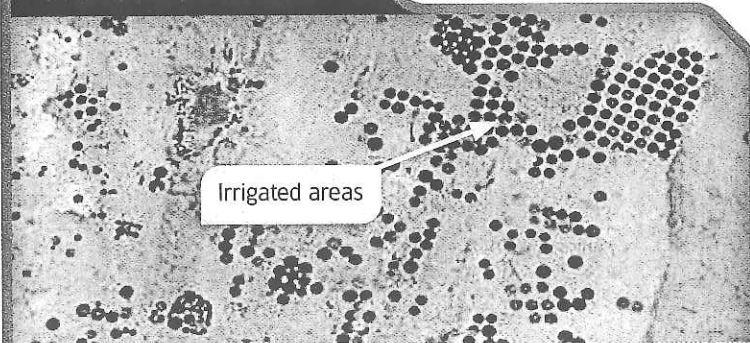
## Resources

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



### 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?

## 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	



7.1.16, 7.2.4

# 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

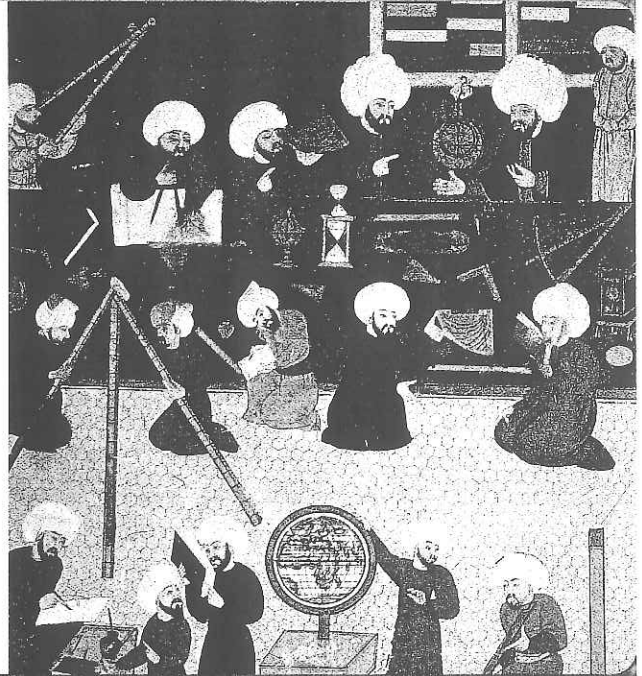
$$y = -2x(x^2 - 2x + 4) + 3x^3$$

### 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 of oil and is the world's leading exporter. Because it controls so much oil, Saudi Arabia is an influential member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. Founded in 1960, **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.

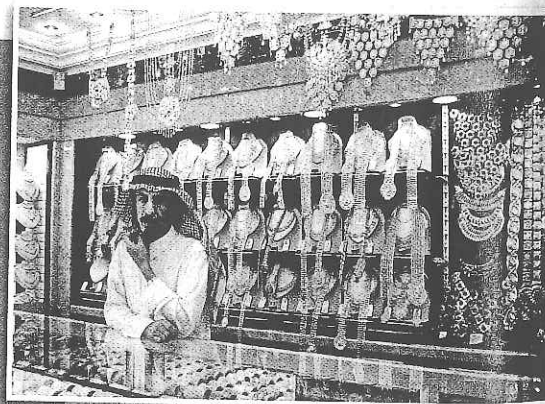
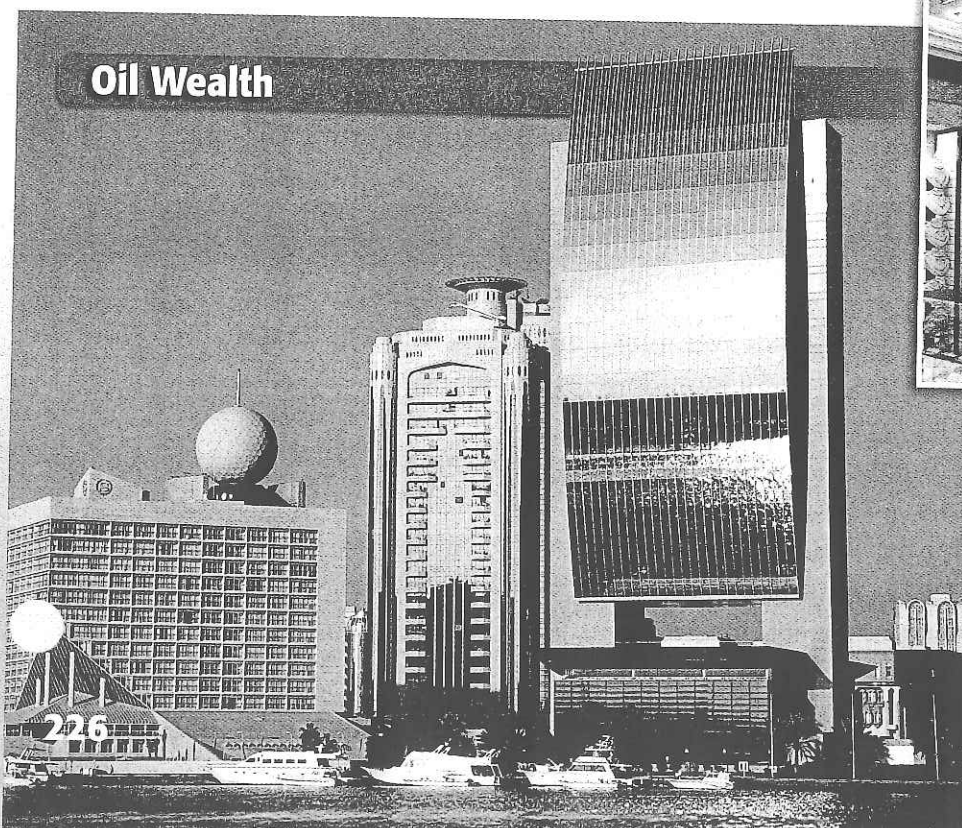
Although Kuwait's government is dominated by a royal family, the country did elect a legislature in 1992. Only men from certain families—less than 15 percent of Kuwait's population—had the right to vote in these elections. However, Kuwait recently gave women the right to vote.

### 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

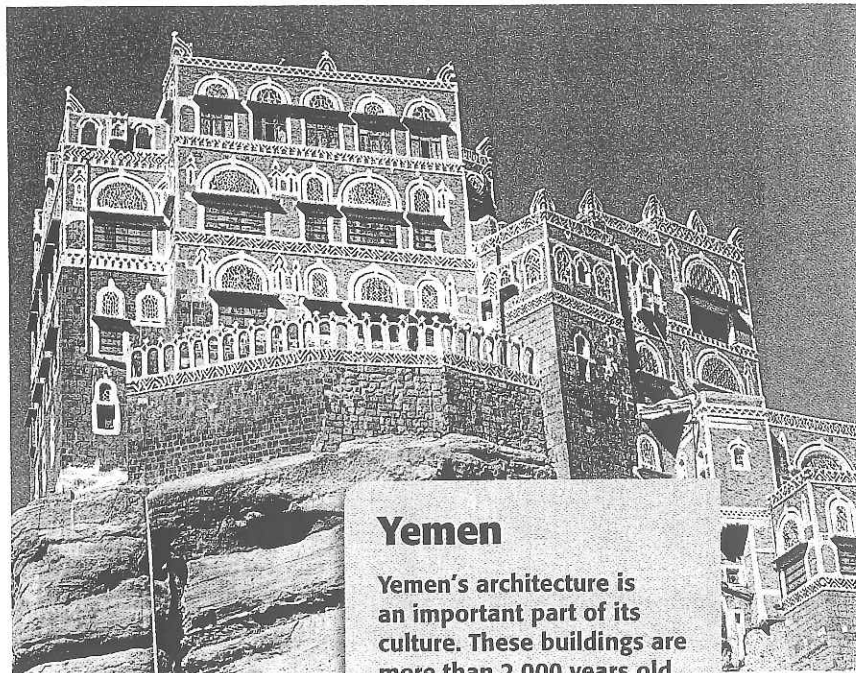
The United Arab Emirates, or UAE, consists of seven tiny kingdoms. Profits from oil and natural gas have created a modern, comfortable lifestyle for the people of the UAE. Partly because it is so small, the UAE depends on foreign workers. In fact, it has more foreign workers than citizens.

## 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

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



# 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




7.1.16

## 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.

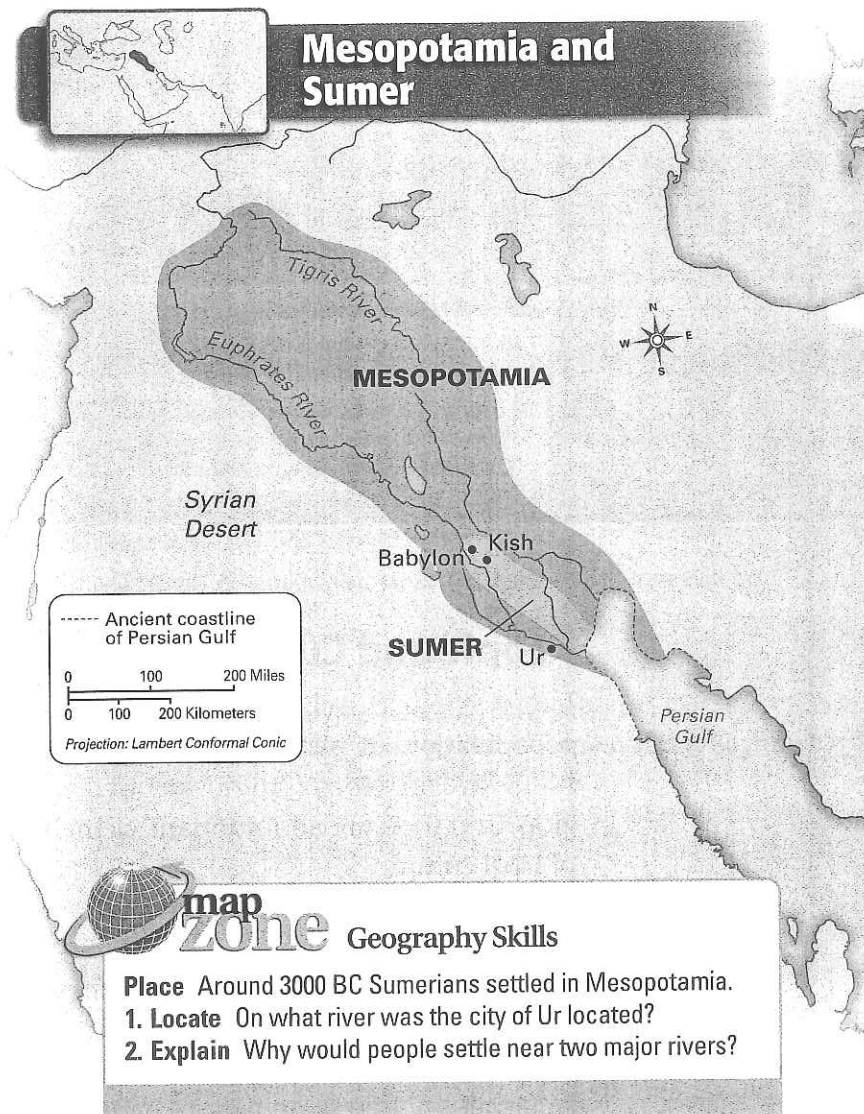
Soon after the fighting ended, Saddam faced two rebellions from Shia Muslims and Kurds. He brutally put down these uprisings. In response, the UN forced Iraq to end all military activity. The UN also required that Iraq allow inspectors into the country. They wanted to make sure that Saddam had destroyed 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, but U.S. soldiers later found Saddam hiding in an underground hole in Iraq. Saddam was arrested, tried, and executed for his crimes.

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

### FOCUS ON INDIANA

By early 2008 more than 12,000 Hoosiers had been deployed to serve in Iraq as part of the War on Terror.

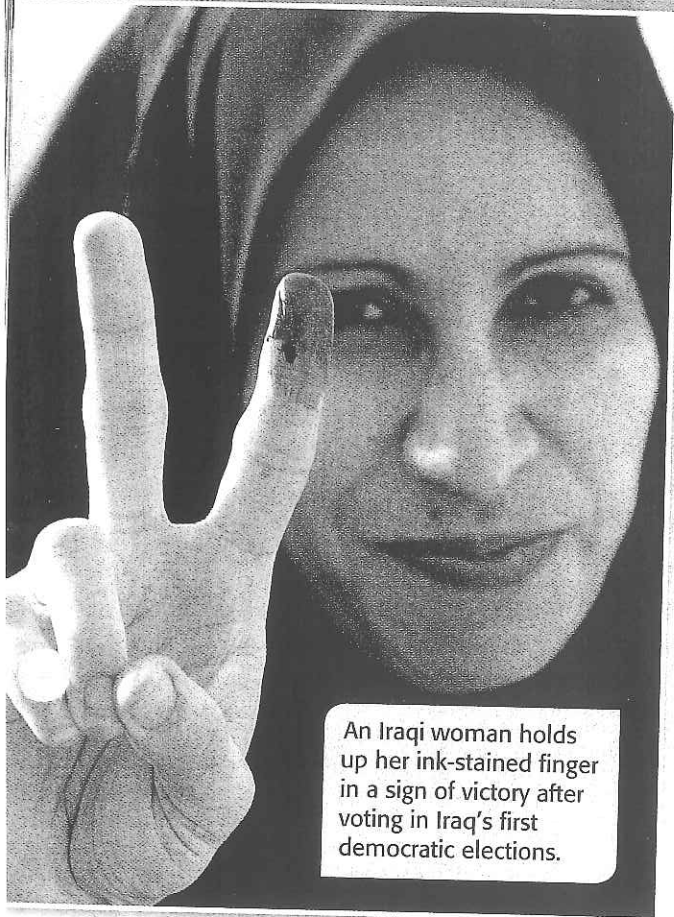




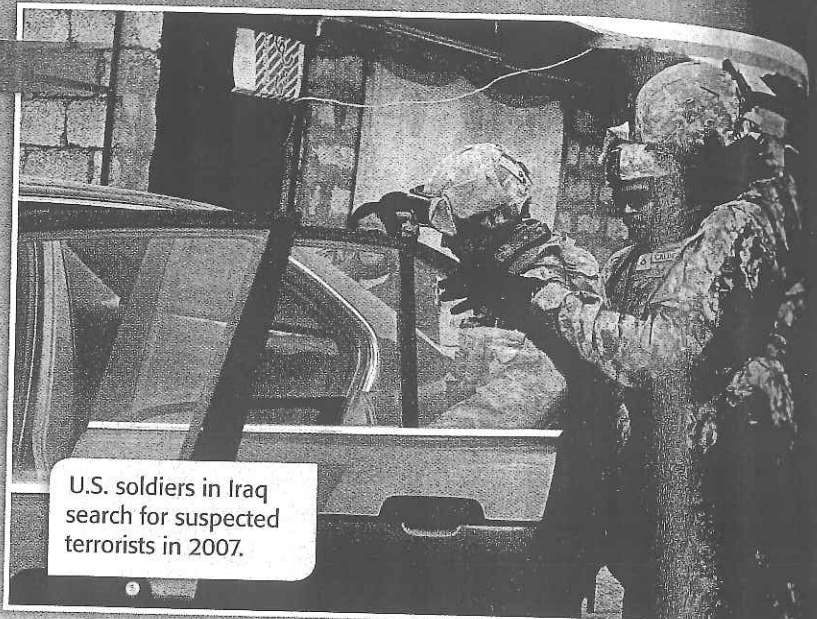
## Iraq Today

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?



An Iraqi woman holds up her ink-stained finger in a sign of victory after voting in Iraq's first democratic elections.



U.S. soldiers in Iraq search for suspected terrorists in 2007.



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 27 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

Despite years of war, Iraq is slowly rebuilding. However, the country faces many challenges, such as ongoing fighting.

### Rebuilding Baghdad

Iraq's capital, **Baghdad**, was severely damaged in the overthrow of Saddam's government. For example, the city's 6 million people lost electricity and running water. To help the city's residents, U.S. military and private contractors worked with the Iraqis to restore electricity and water and to rebuild homes, businesses, and schools. However, violence in Baghdad continued, disrupting efforts to rebuild.

### Government and Economy

In January 2005 Iraqis participated in democracy for the first time. Millions of Iraqis went to the polls to elect members to the National Assembly. One of the Assembly's first tasks was to create a new constitution. Deep divisions among Iraqis led to fierce internal fighting, however, and threatened the new government's stability.

Iraqis also began trying to rebuild 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. Even with help from the United States, rebuilding may take years. Largely because of sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia groups, Iraq faces huge challenges in creating a free and prosperous society.

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

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** In this section, you have learned about Iraq's ancient history, rich culture, and efforts to rebuild. Next, you will learn about Iran, which also has an ancient history but is otherwise quite different from Iraq.

### FOCUS ON READING

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

## Section 3 Assessment

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SK7 HP9

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- Recall** Where was the world's first civilization located?
  - Sequence** What events led to the **embargo** on Iraq by the United Nations?
- Identify** What are two major ethnic groups in Iraq?
  - Contrast** What is one difference between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims?
- Describe** How was **Baghdad** damaged by war?
  - Draw Conclusions** What natural resource may help Iraq's economy recover?
  - 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?



## Iran

## What You Will Learn...

## Main Ideas

1. Iran's history includes great empires and an Islamic republic.
2. In Iran today, Islamic religious leaders restrict the rights of most Iranians.

## The Big Idea

Islam is a huge influence on government and daily life in Iran.

## Key Terms and Places

shah, p. 235

revolution, p. 235

Tehran, p. 235

theocracy, p. 236

## TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes on Iran's history and life in the country today. Use the chart below to organize your notes.

Iran	
History	Today



7.1.16

## If YOU lived there...

You are a student in Tehran, the capital of Iran. In school, you are taught that the way of life in the West—countries of Europe and the Americas—is bad. News reports and newspapers are filled with negative propaganda about Western countries. Yet you know that some of your friends secretly listen to Western popular music and watch American television programs that they catch using illegal satellite dishes at home. This makes you very curious about Western countries.

What would you like to know about life in other countries?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** Like Iraqis, Iranians have a proud and ancient history. While most people living in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq are Arabs, the majority of Iranians are Persian. They have a distinct culture and language.

## History

The early history of the country we now call Iran includes the Persian Empire and a series of Muslim empires. Iran's recent history includes an Islamic revolution. Today Iran is an Islamic republic, which limits the rights of many Iranians.

## Persian Empire

Beginning in the 500s BC, the Persian Empire ruled the region around present-day Iran. For centuries Persia was a great center of art and learning. The Persian Empire was known for its spectacular paintings, carpets, metalwork, and architecture. In the empire's capital, Persepolis, walls and statues throughout the city glittered with gold, silver, and precious jewels.

The Persian Empire was later conquered by several Muslim empires. Muslims converted the Persians to Islam, but most people retained their Persian culture. They built beautiful mosques with colorful tiles and large domes.

## The Shah and Islamic Revolution

In 1921 an Iranian military officer took power and encouraged change in Iran's government. He claimed the old Persian title of **shah**, or king. In 1941 the shah's son took control. This shah became an ally of the United States and Great Britain and tried to modernize Iran. His programs were unpopular with many Iranians.

In 1978 Iranians began a revolution. A **revolution** is a drastic change in a country's government and way of life. By 1979, Iranians overthrew the shah and set up an Islamic republic. This type of government follows strict Islamic law.

Soon after Iran's Islamic Revolution began, relations with the United States broke down. A mob of students attacked the U.S. Embassy in Iran's capital, **Tehran**. With the approval of Iran's government, the students took Americans working at the embassy hostage. More than 50 Americans were held by force for over a year.

**READING CHECK** Drawing Conclusions How did Iran's history lead to the Islamic Revolution?

## Iran Today

Iranian culture differs from many other cultures of Southwest Asia. Unlike most of the Arab peoples living in the region, more than half of all Iranians are Persian. They speak Farsi, the Persian language.

### People and Culture

With about 65 million people, Iran has one of the largest populations in Southwest Asia. Iran's population is very young. Over 35 million Iranians are younger than 25 years old. It is also ethnically diverse. Iranian ethnic groups other than the Persian majority include Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Arabs, and Turks.

Most Iranians belong to the Shia branch of Islam. Only about 10 percent are Sunni Muslim. The rest of Iran's people practice Christianity, Judaism, or other religions.

In addition to the Islamic holy days, Iranians celebrate Nowruz—the Persian New Year. Iranians tend to spend this holiday outdoors. As a part of this celebration, they display goldfish in their homes to symbolize life.

### FOCUS ON READING

Re-read the paragraphs under The Shah and Islamic Revolution to better understand important parts of Iran's recent history.

### Yazd, Iran

In the ancient city of Yazd, spectacular tilework covers the dome of an Islamic mausoleum built in the 1300s.



Iranian culture also includes close-knit families and respect for elders. Most family gatherings in Iran are centered around Persian food, which includes rice, bread, vegetables, fruits, lamb, and tea.

### Economy and Government

Huge oil reserves, which are among the largest in the world, make Iran a wealthy country. In addition to oil, the production of beautiful woven carpets contributes to

Iran's economy. The country's strong agricultural sector employs nearly one-third of the Iranian workforce.

The current government of Iran is a **theocracy**—a government ruled by religious leaders. These religious leaders, or *ayatollahs*, control Iran's government. The head of the *ayatollahs*, or supreme leader, has unlimited power. Even though religious leaders control Iran, its government has an elected president and parliament.

## Life in Iran and the United States

### Iran

#### Daily Life

- An Iranian woman has to cover her head and most of her body with clothing in public.
- Iranians are forbidden to view most Western Web sites, and Internet use is monitored by the government.
- Boys and girls have separate schools, and they can not be alone with each other without adult supervision.

#### Government

- Iran is a theocracy.
- A supreme religious leader rules Iran.
- Only candidates approved by the government can run for political office.

#### Basic Rights

- Freedom of speech, religion, and the press is limited.



Iranian teenagers can shop for computers, but a girl must wear clothing that covers most of her body.

### United States

#### Daily Life

- Americans are free to wear any type of clothing.
- Americans are free to surf the Internet and view most Web sites.
- Boys and girls can attend the same school.

#### Government

- The United States is a democracy.
- A president is the leader of our country.
- Any U.S. citizen can run for political office.

#### Basic Rights

- Freedom of speech, religion, and the press is allowed.



Unlike Iranians, Americans are free to speak in public. Here a teenager speaks on the steps of the Texas State Capitol in Austin.

**Contrasting** In what ways does Iran's government differ from the U.S. government?

Iran's government has supported many hard-line policies. For example, it has called for the destruction of Israel. It has also supported terrorist groups in other countries. With a newly elected president in 1997, some signs indicated that Iran's government might adopt democratic reforms. This government attempted to improve Iran's economy and rights for women.

However, in 2005 Iranians moved away from democratic reforms by electing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (mah-MOOD ah-mah-di-nee-ZAHHD) president. He wants Iranians to follow strict Islamic law. After the election, a reporter asked the new president if he had any plans for reforms. He responded, "We did not have a revolution in order to have a democracy."

More recently, international debate arose over Iran's expansion of its nuclear program. The United States and some of its allies feared that Iran was building nuclear weapons, which could threaten world security. Iran claimed it was using nuclear technology to create energy.

**READING CHECK** Analyzing What are Iran's government and people like?

## BIOGRAPHY

### Shirin Ebadi

(1947– )

Iranians hoping for more democratic reforms were encouraged in 2003 when Shirin Ebadi received the Nobel Peace Prize. Ebadi is a lawyer, judge, and author. However, her work attempting to improve human rights in Iran has at times made her unpopular with the country's government leaders. Ebadi's goals include to attain better conditions for women, children, and refugees.

**Drawing Inferences** Why would Iran's government be opposed to Ebadi's human rights efforts?



**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** In this section you learned about Iran's history, people, culture, economy, and government. In the next chapter, you will learn about the countries of Central Asia that lie to the north and east of Iran.

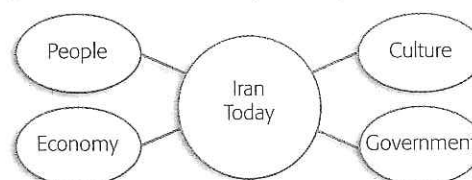
## Section 4 Assessment

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

1. **a. Define** What is a **revolution**?  
**b. Explain** What was the Persian Empire known for?  
**c. Elaborate** What changes were made in Iran after the Islamic Revolution?
2. **a. Recall** What kind of leaders have authority over their people in a **theocracy**?  
**b. Compare** In what ways does Iran's culture differ from cultures in other countries of South-west Asia?  
**c. Predict** How do you think the United States and other nations will deal with Iran's nuclear weapons program?

### Critical Thinking

3. **Finding Main Ideas** Use your notes on Iran today to fill in this diagram with the main ideas of Iran's people, culture, economy, and government.



### FOCUS ON WRITING

4. **Writing about Iran** Record details about Iran in your log. What types of things would you see if you were traveling around Iran?

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**Online Quiz**  
 KEYWORD: SK7 HP9