

# THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

## ACTIVITIES

Throughout history, the geography of the Middle East has been at the heart of many of its most critical political and cultural moments. An understanding of not only its present-day geography, but also its historical geography, is essential for any student eager to understand what's going on in the region, and why.

### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE ARAB WORLD

Working with an elbow partner \_\_\_\_\_ and a sheet of scratch paper, brainstorm a list of as many Middle Eastern and North African countries and capital cities as they can think of.

### II. MAP SKILLS include TACKS

**Label the countries and capitals/major cities of the Middle East and North Africa:**

Turkey (Istanbul, Ankara), Syria (Damascus), Iraq (Baghdad), Iran (Tehran), Jordan (Amman), Israel/Palestine (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv), Lebanon (Beirut), Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Mecca), Kuwait (Kuwait City), Bahrain (Manama), Qatar (Doha), UAE (Abu Dhabi), Oman (Muscat), Yemen (Sanaa), Algeria (Algiers), Libya (Tripoli), Morocco (Rabat), Tunisia (Tunis), Egypt (Cairo).

**Major bodies of water:**

Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab el Mandeb

### III. PARTNER WORK

A. With a new elbow partner \_\_\_\_\_ come up with a list of qualities generally assumed to be similar about Middle Eastern countries.

B. Working with a new elbow partner \_\_\_\_\_ and using in-class resource Up Front Atlas, list on a graphic organizer each country's predominant religion and % who identify with it; predominant language and % who identify with it; form of government, current leader, and his/her years in power.

### IV. HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The boundaries of the modern Middle East largely are a 20th century, post-WWI creation. To understand the modern dynamic of the region, however, it's important to be aware of the boundaries and the leaders that existed for centuries before.

You will be assigned a letter a-e. Research the appropriate empire. Create a summary paragraph of 10 sentences or less, summarize the time period, geographic reach and defining political and cultural traits of one of the following:

- a) The Ottoman Empire
- b) The Byzantine Empire
- c) The Abbasid Caliphate

- d) The Fatimid Caliphate
- e) The Umayyad Caliphate

Share Empire/Caliphate. Others will listen and take notes.

Questions to answer in composition book :

What does this information tell you about the region's history with democratic rule? What about its history as individual countries? In the absence of a strong sense of nationality, to what do you think people felt loyal? (Tribe? Religion? Town? Employer? Family?)

\* Rubric for research and summarization:

2 pts: Paragraph includes the time period that this empire or caliphate was in power.

3 pts: Paragraph includes the capital of the empire/caliphate, as well as its reach at the peak of its power.

3 pts: Paragraph includes the dominant religion of this empire or caliphate. Student should distinguish whether the Muslim rulers are Sunni or Shiite.

4 pts: Paragraph includes one of the most important historical legacies of this empire or caliphate (e.g. brought Islam to North Africa), and at least two cultural or political details of the empire or caliphate.

## **V. POST WWI IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, European colonial powers became a greater influence. Using maps and colored pencils, shade countries based on their colonial power (or, in some cases, their relative independence in the 20th cent.)

Turkey: independent (following fall of Ottoman Empire)

Syria: France

Iraq: Great Britain

Iran: independent

Jordan: Great Britain

Israel: independent (gained statehood in 1948)

Palestine: Great Britain

Lebanon: France

Saudi Arabia: independent

Kuwait: Great Britain

Bahrain: independent (with some British oversight)

Qatar: independent (with some British oversight)

United Arab Emirates: independent (with some British oversight)

Oman independent (with some British oversight)

Yemen: independent (with some British oversight)

Algeria: France

Libya: Italy

Morocco: France

Tunisia: France

Egypt: Britain

## VI. MOSLEM FEDERATION

With a new elbow partner \_\_\_\_\_ read “Moslem Federation,” Washington Post, May 1941. Answer questions in composition book.

### Helpful definitions:

**Mohammedans:** Term once used for Muslims

**Axis Powers:** Countries led by Germany, Italy and Japan opposed to the Allies (led by the U.K., U.S.S.R., and U.S.A., and France), during World War II (1939-1945).

**Sinkiang:** Term once used for northwestern Chinese province of Xinjiang, home to a large population of Chinese Muslims.

**Transjordan:** Term once used for country of Jordan

**Houris:** Arabic term used in the Quran to describe the “chaste” and “modest” “companions of equal age” found in Heaven.

**Lingua franca:** Language used between people of different mother tongues to make communication possible.

**Secular:** not religious

**Drang nach osten:** German for “yearning for the east” or “drive toward the east.” The term became a motto of the German nationalist movement in the late nineteenth century.

**Gibraltar and Ceuta:** British and Spanish ports, respectively, at the western entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. British-controlled Gibraltar is on Spain’s southern coast, and Spanish-controlled Ceuta is on Morocco’s northern coast. The two cities have long been fought over by rival powers due to their important status as gateways to the Mediterranean.

**The Riffs:** Native Berber people of northern Morocco, called Rifian because they speak the Rif Berber dialect.

**Wilson principle of self-determination:** Foreign policy advanced by Woodrow Wilson during WWI stating that nations have the right to choose their sovereignty and political status without interference from other governments.

**Fuehrer:** German title meaning leader, most often associated with Adolf Hitler.

### Follow-up questions: (answer questions in paragraph form in composition book)

1. What does the writer see as the greatest challenges facing the British in deciding what to do about the Middle East?
- \* 2. What assumptions or generalizations does the writer make about Middle Eastern countries and peoples?
3. Do those assumptions and generalizations play into her political guidance for the region? How so?4.
4. What do you think she means by the last paragraph of the article? What is her ultimate recommendation for the region?

\* 5. How do you think the writer would respond to current conditions in the Middle East? Was her advice well-guided? Mistaken? How so?

## **VII. EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

With a new elbow partner \_\_\_\_\_ Research a country currently facing political turmoil and write a piece in the tone of “Moslem Federation” offering modern day guidance concerning U.S. foreign policy.