

A Region by Any Other Name. . . .

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OVERVIEW: It is often true that a place may be categorized as belonging to more than one region, depending on the criteria used. Oklahoma is sometimes categorized as a southern state, a southwestern state, a Great Plains state, or simply as part of the Heartland of the U.S. Mexico is in North America, but is also in Latin America. In the news, **our students hear about “the Arab world,” “the Middle East,” “the Muslim world,” and “southwest Asia.” What do these terms mean? And why do they sometimes appear to be used interchangeably?**

Which countries belong within each regional term? How are the regions different and how are they the same? **This activity leads students to analyze the characteristics of each country and to determine which category or categories apply to each.**

This lesson lays groundwork for students’ understanding of the **complex relationships these countries have with one another.**

Subject: World Geography

Grade Level: 6-12

Objectives:

1. The student will understand varied ways in which “regions” can be defined.
2. The student will understand the differences and similarities between the terms “middle east,” “Arab world,” “Muslim world,” and “southwest Asia.”

National Geography Standards:

Essential Element I. THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

Standard 1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Essential Element II. PLACES AND REGIONS

Standard 5. That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.

Standard 6. How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

Essential Element IV. HUMAN SYSTEMS

Standard 9. The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.

Materials needed:

Atlases showing different characteristics of the specific countries listed (1 per student or 1 per student group) OR general world maps plus handouts of the included world religions map and of the languages map

Country Characteristics chart (1 per student or 1 per student group)

Regions chart (1 per student or per group) OR notebook paper for student-made charts

PROCEDURE:

1. **Ask students** how they would define each of these regions: Middle East, Southwest Asia, Muslim World, Arab world.
2. **Orally give students** the following very general definitions of those four regions.

Middle East – A term Europeans applied to countries between Europe and the “Far East” (another European term applied to India, China, Japan)

Southwest Asia – countries located in the southwest section of the continent of Asia

Muslim World – countries in which Islam is the dominant religion

Arab World – countries in which half or more of the people speak Arabic

(These definitions are also printed on the last “Regions” chart students will use. If you choose to have them create their own charts on notebook paper at the end of the lesson, these definitions should be printed off for the groups or should be projected where students can refer to them as they do the final steps of the lesson.)

3. Tell students that they will be **gathering some information on countries** and will later determine the region in which each country belongs.
4. After receiving a **Country Characteristics chart**, students will use their maps to determine the continents, majority religions, and majority languages of the countries. (Palestine is listed on the chart as a “country,” although it has been recognized by some countries and not by others. In addition, Western Sahara is listed, although it is largely controlled by Morocco.)

For older students, or for classes with online resources, the teacher may choose to have the students do their own research to find the needed information. By doing so, the students will gain a greater understanding of the subtle differences between the countries, as well as for the complexities of the individual countries. For example, they will discover that in Eritrea and Djibouti, Arabic is one of many languages spoken. They will also find out that there are no recent religion statistics on Lebanon because that government has chosen to avoid surveying religious preferences in order to avoid more internal conflict.

5. After gathering the needed information on the chart, **students will then determine which regional category** (categories) contain each country. Country names can be written in on the “Regions” chart, or the chart may be written on notebook paper.

Follow-up discussion

→ **Of the four regions, which includes the most territory?** Muslim world

→ **Which country belongs to only one of these regions?** Indonesia (Muslim world)

→ **How do these regions differ from one another in definition? How are they the same?** (With older students, this could even be done with a Venn Diagram – a quadruple Venn – to show the regions to which each country belongs and the regions excluding each country.)

Suggested differences: The Middle East is the only one which includes a country (Israel) which has a small Muslim population. The Middle East is the only one that has no objective way to determine who is “in” and who is “out.” The Arab World is based on language. The Muslim world is based on religion. Southwest Asia is simply a physical location.

Suggested similarities: In most regions, the countries are in physical proximity to one another. (The “Muslim world” is the exception, with Indonesia far separated physically.) The Muslim countries and the Arab countries are almost the same ones.

→ **Of all of the countries, which seems to have the least in common with the other countries of any of these regions?** Answers will vary. Some may say Israel, because it has a unique religion and language. Some may say Indonesia because of its physical distance. Some may say Cyprus because it is European and is physically separate (an island).

→ **How might the concerns or loyalties of one country in a region be different from those of another country in the same region?** (This is easiest for students to analyze if they have done their own research and therefore have broader knowledge about the countries.) Ideas for answers: Some countries have large oil reserves, while others have minimal natural resources. Cyprus is the only one of these countries that is a member of the European Union, which gives it another set of loyalties and concerns. Iran is predominantly Shi’ite while the other Muslim countries are predominantly Sunni.

Recycling lesson ideas: As students study countries of these regions, continue reminding them of concepts they discovered in this lesson. **These countries have a lot in common, but they also have many differences.** Continue to weave those into further study.

Note to teacher:

While the world religions map attached to this lesson plan shows Eritrea as a Sunni Muslim country, many sources state that it is about half Sunni and half Orthodox Christian. The world languages map lists “Persian” as the language of Iran. Iranians generally refer to their language as “Farsi.”

Selected Characteristics

Country	Majority language	Majority religion	Continent
Afghanistan			
Algeria			
Bahrain			
Cyprus			
Djibouti			
Egypt			
Eritrea			
Indonesia			
Iraq			
Iran			
Israel			
Jordan			
Kuwait			
Lebanon			
Libya			
Mauritania			
Morocco			
Oman			
Palestine			
Qatar			
Saudi Arabia			
Somalia			
Sudan			
Syria			
Tunisia			
Turkey			
United Arab Emirates			
Western Sahara			
Yemen			

Selected Characteristics

answers

Country	Majority language	Majority religion	Continent
Afghanistan	other	Islam	Asia
Algeria	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Bahrain	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Cyprus	Greek	Islam	Europe
Djibouti	other (mixture)	Islam	Africa
Egypt	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Eritrea	other (mixture)	Islam (Islam/Christian)	Africa
Indonesia	Indonesian	Islam	Asia
Iraq	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Iran	Persian (Farsi)	Islam	Asia
Israel	Hebrew	Judaism	Asia
Jordan	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Kuwait	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Lebanon	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Libya	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Mauritania	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Morocco	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Oman	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Palestine	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Qatar	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Saudi Arabia	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Somalia	other (Somali)	Islam	Africa
Sudan	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Syria	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Tunisia	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Turkey	Turkic (Turkish)	Islam	Asia & Europe
United Arab Emirates	Arabic	Islam	Asia
Western Sahara	Arabic	Islam	Africa
Yemen	Arabic	Islam	Asia

→ Write each country under the correct region(s).

Middle East – A term Europeans applied to countries between Europe and the “Far East” (another European term applied to India, China, Japan)

Southwest Asia – countries located in the southwest section of the continent of Asia

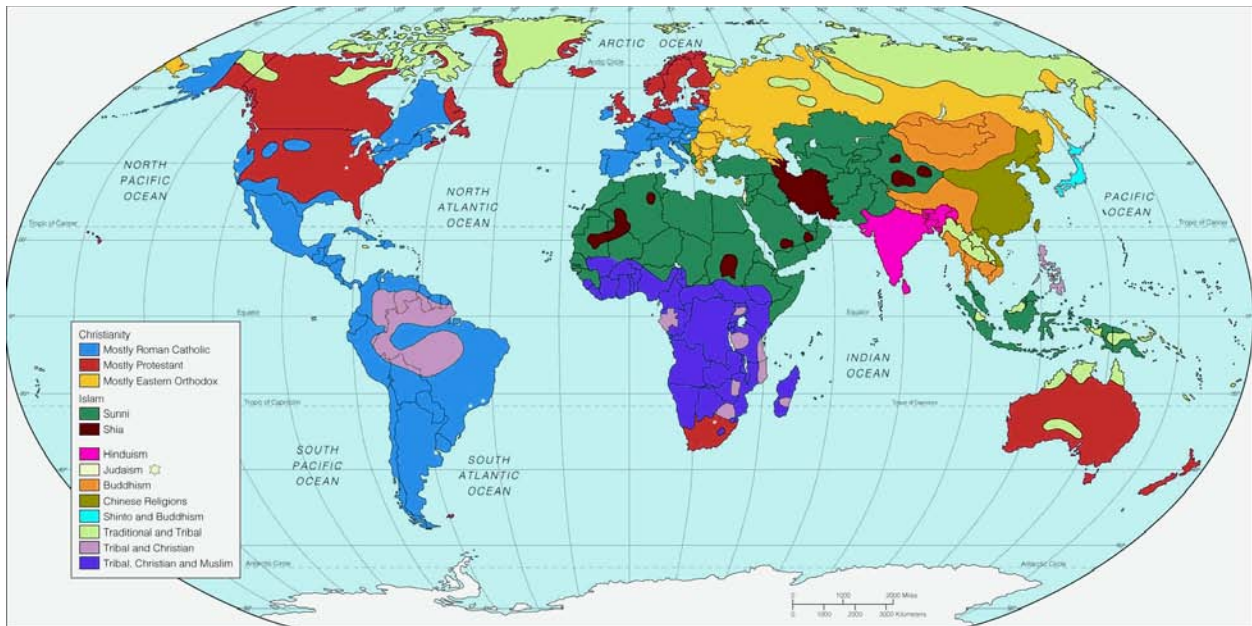
Muslim World – countries in which Islam is the dominant religion

Arab World – countries in which half or more of the people speak Arabic

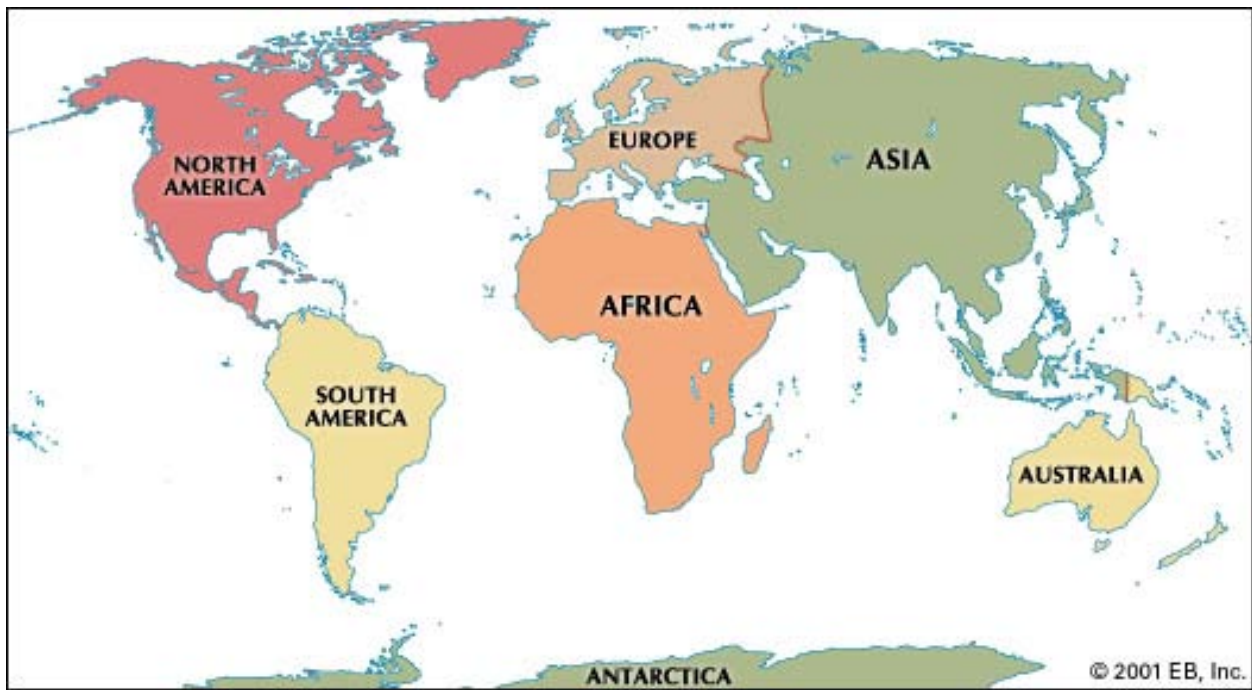
Middle East	Southwest Asia	Muslim World	Arab World



<http://www.mapsofworld.com/images/World-Languages.jpg>



<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/grade3/geoimages/Image12.gif>



<http://qwickstep.com/search/world-map-continents.html>