

Where in the World is the Middle East?

An Action Research Approach
Prepared by Adrienne B. Everton

Time: One Week

Level: Grades 6-12

Rationale:

This is an Action Research on geography of the Middle East. This approach will allow teachers to know what is actually happening in the classrooms, what students are thinking, why students are reacting in the way they do, and what aspects of the classroom teachers should focus on to develop our teaching most effectively, how we should change in these aspects, and what the effects of such a change are.

The Action Research encompasses four components: The Quantitative Analysis, The Qualitative Analysis, Cultural Connection as well as Technology.

Quantitative Analysis: Gather individual student and group data based on their understanding of what is and what is not considered Middle East via Pre-test and Post-test.

Qualitative Analysis: Gather individual and group data based on their interpretation of the dichotomy of how the region of Middle East is divided.

Cultural Connection: Student creates a region using a self-chosen map of i.e., a city, state, home country, and rationalize its dichotomy.

Materials:

- Internet connection, overhead projector for using maps of the Middle East (see link below)
- Class set of background information (handout #1)
- Class set of Student Activity Worksheet #1 and #2
- Class set of Political Outline Map of the Middle East (see link below)
- World map for each group or Map of the World in textbook

Common Core State Standards:

-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (maps) with other information in print and digital texts

Objectives:

- Students will be able to discuss the *characteristics* of a geographical region, and to list characteristics of the Middle East that define it as a region
- Students will be able to give a list of countries in the Middle East and explain their choices and omissions
- Students will create a region of a map by tapping into their *cultural experience, and be able to analyze maps as constructed documents and make educated assumptions about the point of view of makers of Middle East maps.

Essential Questions:

- What is the Middle East?
- What countries does it include?
- How do you decide what countries "belong" in the region, and what countries do not?

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE MIDDLE EAST?**Background Information:****I. WHAT IS THE MIDDLE EAST?**

The Middle East is the common term for a region consisting of countries in southwest Asia and, usually, at least part of North Africa. It is an interesting term - middle of what? east of what? While the term is now widespread both inside and outside the region, it is in fact relatively new. It was coined only at the end of the nineteenth century by the British foreign service, and used in a 1902 article by a United States naval officer.

It was originally used to distinguish the area east of the Near East - the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire - and west of India. It included Afghanistan and Persia. Of course, the Far East denoted the countries of East Asia, including China, Japan, and Korea. And of course, the term is entirely Eurocentric - the region is east from the perspective of western Europe, but not from China, or Russia, or Africa. Today, Near East and Middle East are synonyms, but Middle East is the more widely used term (except in archaeology, where Near East is still more common).

The origin of the name speaks volumes about the political realities of the nineteenth century, when the perspective of the British in particular carried enormous weight. Interestingly, today the term Middle East is commonly used within the region itself. The four most common languages of the Middle East all use the term in translation to describe the region:

Arabic: *al-sharq al-awsat*

Turkish: *orta dogu*

Hebrew: *mizrach tichon*

Persian: *khavarmiyaneh*

To decide what the Middle East is, and what area it covers, we have to understand what a region is. Regions are subjectively determined (and thus debatable) areas that we perceive to have certain characteristics in common. They may be defined by physical geography; for example, areas bordered by mountains or rivers or seas, or areas which share a similar climate. They may also be defined by characteristics of human geography, such as shared historical experience, the same language, the same religion, or similar cultural practices. In the case of

the Middle East, both physical and human geographic considerations are brought to bear to define the region.

What is a Region, anyway?

The Middle East is, very generally speaking, an arid region in Southwest Asia and part of North Africa stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf, bounded by the Black and Caspian Seas in the north and the Sahara Desert and Indian Ocean in the south. It has a long shared history and a shared religious tradition, being the birthplace of the three main monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is also often defined as being a locale of trade and cultural transmission, and sometimes conflict, between Europe, Africa and Asia.

Within the larger Middle East, one can also describe sub-regions, such as North Africa or the Levant, which share certain characteristics. The Levant, for example, encompasses modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories, and is often seen as an important area in part because of its close historical connection with countries in Europe and around the Mediterranean.

The Gulf countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Oman are linked not only by shared history, language and religion, but by the shared opportunities and problems caused by the presence of large oil reserves in these countries. These countries all lie at the eastern edge of a large geological plate (the Arabian plate) that is tilted down from west to east - thus there are mountainous areas on the western end of the plate and oil deposits concentrated along the eastern edge at the shores of the Persian Gulf.

What's in and what's out?

The exact roster of countries thought to be a part of the Middle East region is often debated. If you look at different maps of the Middle East, you will see different countries included and excluded. Almost everyone would agree that the following countries are part of the Middle East:

- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Iran
- Iraq
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Oman
- The Palestinian Territories
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Syria
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen

Notice that all but two are Arabic-speaking majority countries, the exceptions being Iran (where the national language is Persian) and Israel (where the national languages are Hebrew and Arabic).

Egypt is normally included in maps of the Middle East, although it is in Northeast Africa. Why? Egyptians speak Arabic, and Egypt has been a major player in the politics of the Middle East for literally thousands of years, so it is difficult to conceive of the region without Egypt.

Likewise, many experts also include the other countries of North Africa - Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco - because they are also Arabic-speaking and their history and culture are tied to those of the other countries of the Middle East.

Also, most experts in the region would include Turkey - in fact, it is often referred to as a bridge between the Middle East and Europe, both because it straddles the continents of Europe and Asia, and because its historical experience is intertwined both with that of European states and with that of the Middle East.

For our purposes, the Middle East will include all of the countries in the list above as well as:

- Turkey
- Morocco
- Algeria
- Libya
- Tunisia

II. NOT QUITE THE MIDDLE EAST!

Today, many maps include the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Central Asian states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries were usually studied as part of the Soviet bloc and Pakistan and Afghanistan as part of political and cultural region of South Asia, rather than as part of the Middle East.

However, particularly after the tragic events of September 11 and the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, these countries have more often been associated with the Middle East because of their political and religious connections, although there are also many dissimilarities in politics, language and culture between these countries and the Middle East.

Similarly, the countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, located between the Black and Caspian Seas, are sometimes included on maps of the Middle East. Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean, has a majority Greek-speaking population, although there is a minority Turkish population in the northern part of the island who claim independence in a republic recognized only by Turkey. These countries and their peoples have had long interrelationships with the Middle East, but again have strong local characteristics that also distinguish them from their neighbors to the south and east.

Sudan is another country that is sometimes considered to be a part of the Middle East, sometimes because of its close and often contentious relationship with Egypt. While there are significant Arabic-speaking and Muslim populations in Sudan, its other cultural and linguistic differences would usually place it in an African context rather than a Middle Eastern one.

Very often, countries on the periphery of the Middle East are incorporated into maps and into the discourse on the Middle East when there is political strife in these areas, often involving Muslims, simply because many Americans don't distinguish easily between the Middle East and Islam. For our purposes, we will not include these countries in our definition of the Middle East, but will incorporate them into our discussion where it is relevant.

III. WHAT THE MIDDLE EAST IS NOT!

There are two common mistakes that are often made when referring to the Middle East. The first is to confuse the Arab world with the Middle East. The Middle East is a very diverse region, with many languages and cultures. While the majority of the inhabitants of the region speak

Arabic, there are several countries in the Middle East that are not majority Arabic speaking, including Turkey, Iran, and Israel. Of course, there are also minority communities within the Middle Eastern Arab-majority states for whom Arabic is not their native language, including the Kurds, Berbers, and many other groups. At the same time, there are many Arabic speakers who live in non-Arab majority states, from Sudan to the United States. Although there is a great deal of overlap, the Middle East and the Arab world are not the same thing!

The second common mistake is to equate the Middle East and Islam. While Islam began in the area that is now the modern state of Saudi Arabia, it has spread over the centuries so that there are communities of Muslims all over the world.

Most Muslims today don't live in the Middle East or grow up speaking Arabic (although many do learn some Arabic for religious reasons, since it is the language of the Quran). In fact, less than 20% of all the Muslims in the world-and there are over 1.3 billion-are native speakers of Arabic.

Source: TeachMideast - An Educational Initiative of the Middle East Policy Council

Strategies:

1-Brainstorming: a. What is the Middle East? b. Where is the Middle East?

2. Class Discussion / Guiding questions:

- What is a region, and in what way does the Middle East fit that definition?
- What are the defining characteristics of the Middle East?
- Using the world map as your reference, list the countries that fit your definition. How many countries would you include?
- When you are done listing, compare your group's list to those of other groups. Are they the same? What countries did you include that others didn't, and vice versa?
- Where is the map centered? How far do its borders reach? Is this significant? Why or why not?

3- a. Break the class into groups of 3-4 students.

b. Assign a facilitator, a recorder and a reporter for each group

c. Students will read individually or as a class the background information sheet provided. Have each group list the requirements for countries to be included in the Middle East, and then create a country list of states that "fit" that definition.

d. Students will complete activity worksheet that corresponds the background information

4. Mapping Activity:

a. Distribute blank political outline map of the Middle East.

b. In small groups, students will examine a map of the world and locate countries belonging to the Middle East.

c. Students will label countries that belong to the Middle East.

5. Assessment:

Students complete an Exit Ticket by answering the following two questions:

- #1. Are there countries everyone agreed belonged in the Middle East? Why do you think these countries were a more "natural" fit to everyone?

#2. What countries did groups differ on? Why do you think people had different opinions about including them in the Middle East?

6. Create my own region Activity:

Students create a region using a self-chosen map of i.e., a city, state, home country, and rationalize its dichotomy. To prepare student for this exercise, teacher will brainstorm what culture means in the class using A-Z as a guideline. i.e., A for Arts, B for Belief System, C for Communication D for Diet, E for Economy, F for Fashion etc.... Using this spectrum of Culture, student can create a region on a chosen map, and explain its dichotomy why this regional map is being created.

Extension:

Students can individually challenge themselves by using Middle East Interactive Map Puzzle

http: www.yourchildlearns.com/mappuzzle/middle-east-puzzle.html

Citation:

TeachMideast : An Educational Initiative of the Middle East Policy Council

Online Maps:

http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxmid_dleeast.htm

World Atlas Travel Map of the Middle East

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/meoutl.htm>

Enchanted Learning Educational Site Mideast Outline Map

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/continents/Mideast/outlinemap/>

Maps from Susan Douglas

Carolina Center for the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations

<http://www.unc.edu/mideast/where/ilo-1947.shtml>

Handout #1

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE MIDDLE EAST?

I. What is the Middle East?

The Middle East is the common term for a region consisting of countries in southwest Asia and, usually, at least part of North Africa. It is an interesting term - middle of what? east of what? While the term is now widespread both inside and outside the region, it is in fact relatively new. It was coined only at the end of the nineteenth century by the British foreign service, and used in a 1902 article by a United States naval officer.

It was originally used to distinguish the area east of the Near East - the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire - and west of India. It included Afghanistan and Persia. Of course, the Far East denoted the countries of East Asia, including China, Japan, and Korea. And of course, the term is entirely Eurocentric - the region is east from the perspective of western Europe, but not from China, or Russia, or Africa. Today, Near East and Middle East are synonyms, but Middle East is the more widely used term (except in archaeology, where Near East is still more common).

The origin of the name speaks volumes about the political realities of the nineteenth century, when the perspective of the British in particular carried enormous weight. Interestingly, today the term Middle East is commonly used within the region itself. The four most common languages of the Middle East all use the term in translation to describe the region:

Arabic: *al-sharq al-awsat*

Turkish: *orta dogu*

Hebrew: *mizrach tichon*

Persian: *khavarmiyaneh*

To decide what the Middle East is, and what area it covers, we have to understand what a region is. Regions are subjectively determined (and thus debatable) areas that we perceive to have certain characteristics in common. They may be defined by physical geography; for example, areas bordered by mountains or rivers or seas, or areas which share a similar climate. They may also be defined by characteristics of human geography, such as shared historical experience, the same language, the same religion, or similar cultural practices. In the case of the Middle East, both physical and human geographic considerations are brought to bear to define the region.

What is a Region, anyway?

The Middle East is, very generally speaking, an arid region in Southwest Asia and part of North Africa stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf, bounded by the Black and Caspian Seas in the north and the Sahara Desert and Indian Ocean in the south. It has a long shared history and a shared religious tradition, being the birthplace of the three main monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is also often defined as being a locale of trade and cultural transmission, and sometimes conflict, between Europe, Africa and Asia.

Within the larger Middle East, one can also describe sub-regions, such as North Africa or the Levant, which share certain characteristics. The Levant, for example, encompasses modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories, and is often seen as an important area in part because of its close historical connection with countries in Europe and around the Mediterranean.

The Gulf countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Oman are linked not only by shared history, language and religion, but by the shared opportunities and problems caused by the presence of large oil reserves in these countries. These countries all lie at the eastern

edge of a large geological plate (the Arabian plate) that is tilted down from west to east - thus there are mountainous areas on the western end of the plate and oil deposits concentrated along the eastern edge at the shores of the Persian Gulf.

What's in and what's out?

The exact roster of countries thought to be a part of the Middle East region is often debated. If you look at different maps of the Middle East, you will see different countries included and excluded. Almost everyone would agree that the following countries are part of the Middle East:

- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Iran
- Iraq
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Oman
- The Palestinian Territories
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Syria
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen

Notice that all but two are Arabic-speaking majority countries, the exceptions being Iran (where the national language is Persian) and Israel (where the national languages are Hebrew and Arabic).

Egypt is normally included in maps of the Middle East, although it is in Northeast Africa. Why? Egyptians speak Arabic, and Egypt has been a major player in the politics of the Middle East for literally thousands of years, so it is difficult to conceive of the region without Egypt.

Likewise, many experts also include the other countries of North Africa - Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco - because they are also Arabic-speaking and their history and culture are tied to those of the other countries of the Middle East.

Also, most experts in the region would include Turkey - in fact, it is often referred to as a bridge between the Middle East and Europe, both because it straddles the continents of Europe and Asia, and because its historical experience is intertwined both with that of European states and with that of the Middle East.

For our purposes, the Middle East will include all of the countries in the list above as well as:

- Turkey
- Morocco
- Algeria
- Libya
- Tunisia

II. Not quite the Middle East?

Today, many maps include the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Central Asian states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Until the collapse of the

Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries were usually studied as part of the Soviet bloc and Pakistan and Afghanistan as part of political and cultural region of South Asia, rather than as part of the Middle East.

However, particularly after the tragic events of September 11 and the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, these countries have more often been associated with the Middle East because of their political and religious connections, although there are also many dissimilarities in politics, language and culture between these countries and the Middle East.

Similarly, the countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, located between the Black and Caspian Seas, are sometimes included on maps of the Middle East. Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean, has a majority Greek-speaking population, although there is a minority Turkish population in the northern part of the island who claim independence in a republic recognized only by Turkey. These countries and their peoples have had long interrelationships with the Middle East, but again have strong local characteristics that also distinguish them from their neighbors to the south and east.

Sudan is another country that is sometimes considered to be a part of the Middle East, sometimes because of its close and often contentious relationship with Egypt. While there are significant Arabic-speaking and Muslim populations in Sudan, its other cultural and linguistic differences would usually place it in an African context rather than a Middle Eastern one.

Very often, countries on the periphery of the Middle East are incorporated into maps and into the discourse on the Middle East when there is political strife in these areas, often involving Muslims, simply because many Americans don't distinguish easily between the Middle East and Islam. For our purposes, we will not include these countries in our definition of the Middle East, but will incorporate them into our discussion where it is relevant.

III. What the Middle East is not

There are two common mistakes that are often made when referring to the Middle East. The first is to confuse the Arab world with the Middle East. The Middle East is a very diverse region, with many languages and cultures. While the majority of the inhabitants of the region speak Arabic, there are several countries in the Middle East that are not majority Arabic speaking, including Turkey, Iran, and Israel. Of course, there are also minority communities within the Middle Eastern Arab-majority states for whom Arabic is not their native language, including the Kurds, Berbers, and many other groups. At the same time, there are many Arabic speakers who live in non-Arab majority states, from Sudan to the United States. Although there is a great deal of overlap, the Middle East and the Arab world are not the same thing!

The second common mistake is to equate the Middle East and Islam. While Islam began in the area that is now the modern state of Saudi Arabia, it has spread over the centuries so that there are communities of Muslims all over the world.

Most Muslims today don't live in the Middle East or grow up speaking Arabic (although many do learn some Arabic for religious reasons, since it is the language of the Quran). In fact, less than 20% of all the Muslims in the world-and there are over 1.3 billion-are native speakers of Arabic.

Student Activity Worksheet #1:

Instruction: Read the class handout on WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE MIDDLE EAST, answer the questions below:

I. WHAT IS THE MIDDLE EAST?

1. Among the list of the countries, all but which two are Arabic-speaking majority countries? What languages do they speak?
2. Why is Egypt normally included in the maps of the Middle East although it's located in northeast Africa?
3. Why are countries in North Africa, such as Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, included on maps of the Middle East?
4. Why is Turkey included on the maps of the Middle East?
5. Despite the location of the countries listed in questions 2-4 why are they still considered a part of the Middle East?

II. NOT QUITE THE MIDDLE EAST!

6. Why are the countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan included on maps of the Middle East?
7. Why is Sudan sometimes considered to be part of the Middle East?

III. WHAT THE MIDDLE EAST IS NOT!

8. What are the two common mistakes made when referring to the Middle East?
9. What is the reason Muslims around the world learn Arabic?

Student Worksheet #2

Culture comes in different forms. It's a shared belief and values such as customs, practices and social behavior of a particular nation or people.

Students will complete the following activity as a means to the Cultural Component:

CREATE A REGION

Activity: Individual or small group picks a familiar city or town of their choice.

Each individual or group will produce a brochure or booklet advertising the assigned city or town.

The brochure should be colorful and creative and include the following information:

- ☑ catchy phrase to convince travelers to visit;
- ☑ climate, vegetation, distinct or interesting landforms;
- ☑ history of town or city, including founders and reason for settlement;
- ☑ drawings or pictures of town or city; and
- ☑ cultural activities including festivals, art galleries, music halls, libraries, historical societies, American Legion or VFW posts, quilting clubs, etc.
- ☑ a town or area map including how the region is created

Evaluation: Students should be evaluated based on the inclusion and quality of the above criteria.

Rubric:

Class Discussion: Geography of the Middle East

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	25	21	18	15
Contributions	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard!	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. May refuse to participate.
Problem-solving	Actively looks for and suggests solutions to problems.	Refines solutions suggested by others.	Does not suggest or refine solutions, but is willing to try out solutions suggested by others.	Does not try to solve problems or help others solve problems. Lets others do the work.
Attitude	Never is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Always has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Rarely is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Often has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Occasionally is publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Usually has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Often is publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Often has a negative attitude about the task(s).
Working with Others	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

Exit Ticket

Exit Ticket

Exit Ticket

Exit Ticket
