As you read this chapter, use your journal to note the ethnic diversity of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia. Record both similarities and differences among the peoples who inhabit this region.

Chapter Overview Visit the Glencoe World Geography Web site at tx.geography.glencoe.com and click on Chapter Overviews—Chapter 18 to preview information about the cultural geography of the region.
Guide to Reading

Consider What You Know
As you know, the region of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia is made up of a variety of physical features and climates. Many different peoples live in the region. How does the diversity of ethnic groups affect life in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia?

Read to Find Out
• How have movement and interaction of people in the region led to ethnic diversity?
• How do the region’s seas, rivers, and oases influence where people live?
• What effect does the growing migration into the cities have on the region?

Terms to Know
• ethnic diversity
• infrastructure

Places to Locate
• Turkey
• Afghanistan
• Armenia
• Georgia
• Kazakhstan
• Tajikistan
• Uzbekistan
• Tehran

Population Patterns

A Geographic View

Refuge of Peoples
A refuge since the last period of Eurasian glaciation, the Caucasus region has been a gateway for travel, trade, and conquest. [Despite the numerous power struggles] the Caucasus has remained a [stronghold] of peoples whose identities are tied to the 50-some languages they speak. . . . The persistence of the enduring identities of ethnic groups has been aided by the rugged terrain and by societies whose loyalties are to clan and family as much as to nation or region.


Like North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia as a whole, the Caucasus area has long been home to many peoples. Some of these peoples vanished long ago—defeated in wars, wiped out by famines, or absorbed by more powerful groups. Others have survived for hundreds of years and flourish today because of contact with travelers, merchants, and conquerors from distant places. The result is a tapestry as rich and varied as the region’s much-sought-after carpets.

Many Peoples
The region of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia has served as the crossroads for Asia, Africa, and Europe. As a result, the region has remarkable ethnic diversity, or differences among groups based on their languages, customs, and beliefs.
Over the centuries, wars, persecution, and trade led many Jews—as the descendants of the Israelites are called—to settle in other countries. Their religious identity, however, kept alive their link to the ancestral homeland. Finally, in 1948, Israel was founded as a Jewish state. Today half of Israel’s Jews were born in Israel, and half have emigrated from elsewhere.

The Arabs of the region, however, did not want a Jewish state in territory that had been their homeland for centuries. Tensions between Arabs and Jews resulted in four wars that brought severe hardship to all the people of the area, including the Palestinians—Arabs living in the territory in which Israel was established. During this period of conflict, many Palestinians were displaced from their homes and lived in refugee settlements in neighboring Arab countries.

Today agreements between Israeli and Palestinian leaders have led to greater Palestinian self-rule. Nevertheless, peace is still elusive. Issues such as the ownership of the Old City of Jerusalem, the return of Palestinian refugees, and ownership of water and other natural resources remain unresolved.

Arabs

Most people of the region—about 275 million—are Arabs. Most Arabs are Muslims, followers of the religion of Islam, but a small percentage follow Christianity or other religions. Both Islamic culture and Arabic, the language of the Arabs, have had a significant impact in this region.

Before the spread of Islam in the A.D. 600s, Arabic-speaking peoples inhabited the Arabian Peninsula and a few areas to its north. Many Arabic-speaking people today, however, descend from ancient groups such as the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Saharan Berbers, and peoples speaking Semitic languages. Currently, Arabs live in 16 countries, including Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco—the countries known as the Maghreb—“the West” in Arabic.

Israelis

About 6.4 million people of the region are Israelis living in Israel. Of these, 82 percent are Jewish. The remaining 18 percent are mostly Arabs who are Muslim or Christian.

Jews living in Israel and elsewhere trace their religious heritage to the Israelites, who in ancient times settled Canaan, the land shared today by Israel and Lebanon. The Israelites believed that God had given them this area as a permanent homeland. Over the centuries, wars, persecution, and trade led many Jews—as the descendants of the Israelites are called—to settle in other countries. Their religious identity, however, kept alive their link to the ancestral homeland. Finally, in 1948, Israel was founded as a Jewish state. Today half of Israel’s Jews were born in Israel, and half have emigrated from elsewhere.

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Turks

Over the past 8,000 years, many peoples have occupied Anatolia, the Asian part of what is today the country of Turkey. Each group added its own customs and beliefs to the cultural blend. Turkic peoples migrated to the peninsula in the A.D. 1000s from Central Asia. One Turkic group, known as the Ottoman Turks, later built the Ottoman Empire, which ruled much of the eastern Mediterranean world for more than 600 years. When a group of Turkish citizens was asked to define who a Turk is today, one of them responded this way:

“I don’t believe anybody is Turkish, whatever that means,” he said. Then, swinging his arms to take in the lunch crowd, he exclaimed, ‘Look at us! A mix of Turks, Arabs, Jews, Greeks, Iranians, Armenians, Kurds.’”


Most Turks practice Islam and speak the Turkish language. They have a culture that blends Turkish, Islamic, and Western elements.

Iranians and Afghans

About 66 million people live in Iran, once called Persia. The word Iran means “land of the Aryans.” Many Iranians believe they are descendants of the Aryans (AR•ee•uhnz), Indo-Europeans who migrated into the region from southern Russia about 1000 B.C. Iranians speak Farsi, and almost 90 percent of them are Shiite (SHEE•EYET) Muslims.

On the eastern border of Iran is Afghanistan. This mountainous country is home to many ethnic groups that reflect centuries of migrations and invasions by different peoples. People in Afghanistan speak many languages, and most practice Islam.

Caucasian Peoples

More than 50 ethnic groups and nationalities live in the Caucasus area. Armenians and Georgians are among the largest ethnic groups.

Armenians make up more than 90 percent of the population of the republic of Armenia, which became independent after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. The Armenians have had their own language and literature for more than 15 centuries, and in the A.D. 300s most accepted Christianity.

In ancient times the Armenians ruled a large, powerful kingdom. For much of their later history, however, the Armenians were ruled by others—Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Russians. In 1915 about 1 million Armenians in Turkey were massacred, were deported, or died of illness at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. Many survivors fled to Southwest Asia, Europe, and the United States.

The republic of Georgia also became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Like the Armenians, most Georgians became Christian in the A.D. 300s. Today they have their own Orthodox Christian Church. The Georgian language, with its unique alphabet, is related to other Caucasian languages, which suggests that the Georgians probably originated in the Caucasus region.

Turkic Peoples

Most Turkic peoples outside of Turkey, including Uzbeks and Kazakhs, live in the republics of Central Asia. All of these peoples speak Turkic languages, and almost all are Muslims.

The Uzbeks form the largest Turkic group in the Central Asian republics. Of the Central Asian Turkic peoples, only the Kazakhs are a minority in their own country, Kazakhstan. Under Russian and, later, Soviet rule, Kazakhstan was settled by large numbers of Russians, Ukrainians, and Germans. Since the end of the Soviet era, the proportion of Kazakhs has increased for two reasons: a high birthrate and the movement of many non-Kazakhs out of Kazakhstan.

The Tajiks (tah•JIHKS), a predominantly Muslim non-Turkic group in the Central Asian republics, make up most of the population of Tajikistan. Tajiks also live in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and speak a language similar to Farsi.
Kurds

The Kurds also speak a language related to Farsi, and most Kurds are Muslims. They live in the border areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the Caucasian republics, in an area that is sometimes called Kurdistan. However, the Kurds have no country of their own. Their efforts to win self-rule have been repeatedly crushed by their Turkish and Arab rulers.

Population and Resources

Geographic factors, especially the availability of water, help determine where the region’s people have settled. Because water is scarce, people have for centuries settled along seacoasts and rivers, near oases, or in rain-fed highlands where drinking water is readily available. For example, many people live along the Nile River in Egypt or in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley in Iraq. Desert areas remain largely unpopulated except where oil is abundant. Nomadic herders live in or near the desert oases or where there is enough vegetation to support their herds.

Government

Control of a Vital Resource

Water has been a major issue in border disputes between Israel and Syria. As much as 30 percent of Israel’s water comes from the Sea of Galilee, which is partly fed by streams beginning in the Golan Heights, a Syrian area that Israel conquered in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The Jordan River carries the water south, where Israeli farmers use it to irrigate their crops. Some 15,000 Israelis live in the Golan Heights. The area also has about 17,000 Arabs. Syria wants Israel to return the Golan Heights, but Israel is reluctant to give up needed water resources.

Population Growth

The region’s most populous countries are Turkey, Egypt, and Iran, each with more than 65 million people. Morocco, Uzbekistan, Algeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan each have between 20 million and 31 million people. Other countries each have about 18 million or fewer people.

Overall, the region’s population is growing rapidly. The result is that many citizens in some countries, especially those in North Africa, are unemployed and must migrate to other countries to find work. This migration serves as a safety valve for some countries, helping to diffuse political discontent.

Urbanization

Large urban areas, such as Istanbul, Turkey; Cairo, Egypt; Tehran, Iran; and Baghdad, Iraq, dominate social and cultural life in their respective countries. Cities like these have been growing rapidly as villagers move there in search of a better life. Problems
have arisen, however, because cities have grown too fast to supply enough jobs and housing or improve the infrastructure—basic urban necessities like streets and utilities. Poverty, snarled traffic, and pollution have resulted. Families moving to a city sometimes crowd into single rooms or live in makeshift shelters far from the city’s center, and they overload public resources. For example, illegal developments without water or waste services have cropped up on the outskirts of Cairo, adding to the city’s sanitation problems.

Some cities have tried to cope by installing traffic control systems and improving public transportation. Iran has tried another solution—decentralizing its government. It has set up many government offices in various towns and villages away from the capital, Tehran. By doing so, Iran hopes to improve services in outlying areas and slow Tehran’s rapid growth.

### TAKS Practice

**Checking for Understanding**

1. **Define** ethnic diversity, infrastructure.

2. **Main Ideas** Create a table like the one below, and fill it in to show information about the diverse peoples, religions, and languages of this region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North Africa</th>
<th>Southwest Asia</th>
<th>Central Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peoples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Critical Thinking**

3. **Comparing and Contrasting** In what ways is the population of Turkey similar to and different from the population of Iran? What may account for these differences and similarities?

4. **Identifying Cause and Effect** What historical event accounts for the large number of Armenians living outside their homeland?

5. **Predicting Consequences** What might happen if Israel returns the Golan Heights to Syria? How would this affect life in Israel? In Syria?

**Analyzing Maps**

6. **Location** Study the population density map on page 412. Where are the largest concentrations of people in the region? Why are they concentrated there?

**Applying Geography**

7. **Ethnic Diversity** Think about the diverse groups of people you have read about. Write a paragraph describing positive aspects of ethnic diversity in the region. Also mention any drawbacks to ethnic diversity.
LIKE THE GENIE IN ALADDIN’S LAMP, oil has brought unimagined riches to the nations of the Persian Gulf. Trapped in pockets beneath the region’s sandy soils are two-thirds of the world’s known petroleum reserves. This “black gold” provides the raw material for everyday products such as compact discs, crayons, and house paint. In addition, oil supplies more than half of the energy used worldwide. Almost overnight, oil profits transformed villages in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and other Gulf countries from watering holes for camel caravans into gleaming, modern cities.

The discovery of oil in the early 1900s, however, did not immediately bring riches to the region. Nor did drilling wells to extract oil from the ground. The American and European companies who owned the wells paid host countries only about 20 cents a barrel, and the quantity of oil tapped was small.

**Boom Times**

Low oil prices in the late 1950s caused Western companies to cut payments to the oil-producing countries. In 1960 Venezuela joined with four Gulf states—Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia—to form the

Massive pipelines carry tons of crude oil from wells in Saudi Arabia.
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The OPEC nations agreed to reduce oil production in an effort to cut supplies and increase prices. As demand grew, the group gradually assumed more power. They set their own prices for oil and mandated production quotas for each country. In 1973 the Arab oil embargo, sparked by the Arab-Israeli War, reduced supplies and further boosted prices. In less than a year, prices increased fourfold.

With money pouring in, Gulf countries took over ownership of their oil operations. Big budgets meant big spending. Billions were used to build highways, airports, and telecommunications systems. Hospitals and schools sprang up, and governments showered their citizens with free medical care, low-cost housing, and lifetime jobs.

**Planning for Post-Oil Days**
Beginning in the early 1980s, however, oil prices started to decline. Why? Reduced consumption and increased oil production outside the Middle East led to a surplus of oil. As oil profits shrank, collaboration among OPEC members began to break down. Quota disputes and other disagreements led Iraq to invade Kuwait in 1990, igniting the Persian Gulf War. Many Gulf countries have cut spending—an unpopular move among citizens accustomed to subsidies.

While OPEC members manipulate current oil prices, they also know they must prepare for the day their oil reserves will run out. Today Gulf countries are investing in foreign real estate and creating new businesses at home, from cement factories to theme parks.

**Looking Ahead**
Persian Gulf leaders expect their oil to run out within this century. Many are reconsidering their dependence on oil. Will oil prove to be a genie of good or bad fortune? What will be oil’s legacy in the Persian Gulf?
Yemen is only one of many young countries with a long history in the region of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia. This region saw the rise of some of the world’s greatest civilizations and the birth of three of the world’s major religions. Sadly, the region also has a long history of intense conflicts.

Prehistoric Peoples

Hunters and gatherers settled throughout North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia by the end of the last Ice Age, about 10,000 years ago. By 6000 B.C. farming communities had arisen in areas along the Nile River, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Taurus and Zagros Mountains.

The region’s farmers were among the first in the world to domesticate plants and animals, or take them from the wild and make them useful to people. These farmers captured and herded cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and camels. Some of the animals were used for food. Farmers used the hides to make clothes and shelters.
Early Civilizations

Although much of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia has dry land, important civilizations developed there. These civilizations began to grow in the region’s most fertile areas about 6,000 years ago.

The civilizations that arose in Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, comprised one of the world’s first culture hearths, or centers where cultures developed and from which ideas and traditions spread outward. Part of a larger, rich agricultural region known as the Fertile Crescent, the area was home to the Sumerian civilization. The Sumerians mastered farming by growing crops year-round and using canals to irrigate them. The Sumerians made great strides in soil science, mathematics, and engineering. They also established at least 12 cities and created a code of law to keep order. They kept records by using a writing system called cuneiform (kyu•NEE•uh•FAWRM), wedge-shaped symbols written on wet clay tablets that were then baked to harden them.

Egyptian civilization flourished along the Nile River. Annual floods from the Nile deposited rich soils on the flood plain. During dry seasons Egyptians used sophisticated irrigation systems to water crops, enabling farmers to grow two crops each year. The Egyptians also developed a calendar with a 365-day year, built impressive pyramids as tombs for their rulers, and invented a form of picture writing called hieroglyphics (HY•ruh•GLIH•fihks).

Empires and Trade

The Phoenician civilization, which arose along the eastern Mediterranean coast, developed an alphabet in which letters stood for sounds. It formed the basis for many alphabets used in much of the Western world today.

During the 500s B.C., the Persian Empire extended from the Nile River and the Aegean Sea in the west to Central Asia’s Amu Darya in the east. Realizing that irrigation water would evaporate in surface canals, the Persians constructed a system of qanats, or underground canals, to carry water from the mountains across the desert to farmlands.

Beginning about 100 B.C., parts of Central Asia and Southwest Asia prospered from the Silk Road, a trade route connecting China with the Mediterranean Sea. Many cities in the region, such as Samarqand in present-day Uzbekistan, thrived as trading stations along the Silk Road. At these stations travelers and merchants traded Chinese silks and Indian cotton as well as ideas and inventions. Because of the Silk Road, with its cultural and commercial exchange, the region became known as the “crossroads of civilization.”

Today, as they did hundreds of years ago, nomads travel across the steppes of Central Asia seeking grasslands for their herds. Sometimes nomadic peoples, including the Mongols, invaded these lands. During the late 1100s, a leader known as Genghis Khan united the nomadic Mongol tribes living north of China. In the 1200s they invaded Central Asia, establishing a vast empire. The Mongols killed tens of thousands of people to gain control, but later they brought many improvements to the region, such as paper money and safer trade routes.

MAP STUDY

Early Civilizations, c. 3000 B.C.

1. Analyzing Maps What body of water lies southeast of the Tigris-Euphrates area?

2. Applying Geography Skills How did location and environment aid the development of early Southwest Asian civilizations?
Three Major Religions

Three major religions began in the region: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three share many beliefs, especially monotheism, or belief in one God.

Judaism

Judaism is the oldest of the monotheistic faiths. Followers of Judaism, known as Jews, trace their origin to the ancient Israelites, who set up the kingdom of Israel along the eastern Mediterranean coast. There they made Jerusalem their capital and religious center.

Despite political division, conquest, and exile to Mesopotamia, Jews and Judaism continued to survive and flourish. Many Jews eventually left Mesopotamia and returned to their homeland, now known as Judah. Others settled elsewhere in the Mediterranean. As they scattered, the Jews took their beliefs with them.

Judaism teaches obedience to God’s laws and the creation of a just society. Believing that events have a divine purpose, the Jews recorded their history and examined it for meaning. Writings based on laws and on the history of the Jews make up the Hebrew Bible, or Torah. Worship services are traditionally held in synagogues, where a rabbi officiates.

Christianity

About A.D. 30, in the territory of Judah, a Jewish teacher named Jesus began preaching a message of renewal and God’s mercy. Some of Jesus’ teachings made him unpopular with people in power, and the Roman officials ruling the area had Jesus put to death. Jesus’ followers soon proclaimed that he was the world’s savior, alive in heaven, and that a new life in the world to come would be given to those who believed in Jesus and followed his teachings.

The life and teachings of Jesus became the basis of a new religion—Christianity. The Christian scriptures came to include the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament, and writings on the life and teachings of Jesus as well as on the experiences of the earliest Christian communities as the New Testament. As the centuries passed, Christians spread the message of Jesus throughout the Mediterranean world and into Asia, Africa, and Europe, and eventually to the Americas.

Islam

Islam today is the major religion of Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Central Asia. Islamic tradition states that in A.D. 610, revelations from God came to Muhammad, a merchant in the city of Makkah (Mecca) in the Arabian Peninsula. Muhammad began preaching that people should turn away from sin and worship the one true God. Various groups in the peninsula accepted Muhammad’s message, acknowledging him as the last in a line of prophets, or messengers, that included Abraham and Jesus.

By the 800s, Islam had spread to North Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, Southwest Asia, and parts of Europe. Islam had profound religious, political, and cultural influences in these areas. One of the new features seen in the region’s cities was the mosque, a house of worship where Muslims pray. Muslim scholars also made important contributions:

“During Europe’s [Middle Ages], the light of Islam shone, unifying, stimulating the cultures of many lands with the currents of trade and the bond of a common language, Arabic. Ibn Sina of Bukhara, known to the West as Avicenna, wrote his Canon, which remained Europe’s medical textbook for more than 500 years. Mathematician al-Khwarizmi of Baghdad introduced ‘Arabic’ numerals and the decimal system from India and wrote the standard treatise on al-jabr—algebra.”

—Thomas J. Abercrombie, Great Religions of the World, 1971

The geographer Ibn Battuta traveled extensively throughout the Muslim world in the 1300s. He described the peoples and places of the region in his famous book, the Rihlah. Other Muslim scholars wrote about Islamic achievements and translated Greek writings into Arabic, works that later added to European knowledge about the ancient world.

Today around one-fifth of the world’s population follows Islam and is called Muslim, a term meaning “those who submit to God’s will.” Muslims follow their faith’s principles set down in the Quran, Islam’s holy book. They also fulfill five duties known as the Five Pillars of Islam: professing faith in
God and the prophet Muhammad, praying five times a day, helping the poor and needy, fasting during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and making a pilgrimage to Makkah, Islam’s holiest city.

The Modern Era

As the centuries passed, Muslim empires in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia rose and fell. Major conflicts, including the Crusades and the Mongol invasions, brought challenges to the region. Physical geography sometimes placed limits on economic development. For example, empires in North Africa and Southwest Asia lacked resources such as minerals, wood, and coal to fuel an industrial revolution like that of western Europe. By the late 1800s, western European powers controlled large areas of North Africa and Southwest Asia, and the Russian Empire took much of Central Asia.

Although the Caucasus area prospered under the Russians, peoples in other parts of the region were discontented under foreign control. During the 1800s a well-educated urban middle class developed in North Africa and Southwest Asia. Trained in European ways, this new middle class adopted European ideas about nationalism, or a belief in the right of an ethnic group to have its own independent country. This development stirred demands for self-rule that provided the basis for the modern countries that have emerged in the region.
Independence

In North Africa and Southwest Asia, the continuing rise of nationalism after World Wars I and II gradually ended direct European colonial rule. By the 1960s most territories in these regions had achieved political freedom. Independence has been a more recent development in Muslim Central Asia, where countries did not win their freedom until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Even after gaining independence, the regional economies of countries often remained under European control. Regional governments sometimes retaliated by seizing European property. Leaders in Iran, Iraq, and Libya nationalized, or placed under government control, the foreign-owned oil companies within their borders.

Arab-Israeli Conflict

Not all the independent countries in the region are Arab or Muslim. An exception is Israel, founded in 1948 as a Jewish state. About 1,900 years earlier, the Romans had expelled most Jews from their ancestral homeland, known as Palestine. These Jewish migrants eventually settled in communities scattered around the world. In their adopted countries, the Jews often faced persecution by the majority population around them. In the late 1800s, a fierce wave of persecution drove many European Jews to call for the return of the Jews to Palestine and for the creation of a Jewish homeland there. Many of these Jews, known as Zionists, began to settle in Palestine, which was then largely Arab and under Ottoman Turkish rule.

After World War I, the British gained control of Palestine. They supported a Jewish homeland there while claiming to give equal attention to the interests of the majority Arab population. These conflicting goals, as well as increasing Jewish immigration into Palestine, sparked conflict between Palestine’s Arab and Jewish communities. Later, the murder of 6 million European Jews by the Nazis in the Holocaust increased Western sympathy for the Zionist cause.

After World War II, hostilities broke out in Palestine among Jews, Arabs, and British forces. Finally, the United Nations decided in 1947 to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. When the British withdrew from Palestine, the Jews proclaimed the independent state of Israel in 1948. During the next 25 years, Arab opposition to Israel and Israel’s concern for its security led to four major wars in the region. In the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli
conflicts, victorious Israeli forces took over Arab lands that had been part of Palestine. Since its formation, Israel has drawn many Jewish immigrants from around the world.

**Israelis and Palestinians**

The wars that followed the birth of Israel forced many Palestinian Arabs from their homes to live as refugees or settlers in other lands. The status of the Palestinian refugees is an ongoing issue in the Arab-Israeli dispute. In addition, the Palestinians—both refugees and those living in Israeli-occupied areas—want an independent state of their own in the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas. The West Bank lies west of the Jordan River, between Israel and Jordan. The Gaza Strip is a territory bordered on the south by Egypt, on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, and on the north and east by Israel.

The goal of Palestinian independence is complicated by the many Jewish settlements that have been built on the West Bank since the 1967 war. The challenge, says one West Bank resident, is straightforward: “Israelis and Palestinians claim the right of return to the same land.”

Israel and the Palestinians finally agreed to the first stages of a peace settlement in 1993. Under its terms the Palestinians would gain limited self-rule in return for Arab recognition of Israel’s right to exist as a nation. Another stage began with the Wye River Agreement, signed in 1998. It called for Israeli troop withdrawals from Israeli-held areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to increase Palestinian self-rule.

In 2000, peace talks stalled over the status of Jerusalem and over other issues. During the next year, renewed violence between Israeli forces and Palestinians had put the peace process in jeopardy.

**War in Afghanistan**

In past centuries, Hindu Kush mountain passes brought waves of invaders and traders to Afghanistan. Having an ethnically diverse population, Afghanistan in recent years has seen conflict involving foreign forces and rival Afghan groups. In the 1990s, radical Muslims known as the Taliban won control of most of the country. Taliban leaders were criticized internationally for human rights abuses, especially in limiting education and jobs for women, and for sheltering terrorists, such as wealthy Saudi exile Osama bin Laden.

In October 2001, American and British warplanes began bombing Afghan targets in the first military
operation of the war on terrorism. The United States also gave ground and air support to the Northern Alliance, a group of Afghan rebels fighting the Taliban. With this help, the Northern Alliance in November captured major Afghan cities and routed most Taliban forces. Talks then began to form a new Afghan government. Meanwhile, bin Laden and his aides remained at large in the mountain caves that honeycomb Afghanistan. The United States and other nations expressed resolve to defeat them and bring them to justice.

**Border Conflicts**

Since World War II, various nations in Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Central Asia have fought each other over land and water resources. In 1980 a border dispute led to years of war between Iraq and Iran. Ten years later, Iraq’s invasion of its oil-rich neighbor Kuwait forced the world community to impose an embargo, or a ban on trade, against Iraq. During the Persian Gulf War in early 1991, the United States and other countries forced Saddam Hussein, Iraq’s leader, to withdraw his army from Kuwait. For years, the region’s 20 million Kurds, most of whom live in border areas of Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, have sought a country of their own. Political differences among the Kurds themselves and opposition by the governments ruling them have kept the Kurds from realizing this goal.

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**Government**

**Today’s Governments**

The countries of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia have various forms of government. Traditionally the region was under the rule of dynasties. Today monarchs with varying degrees of power still rule in eight countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Jordan.

The rest of the region’s countries call themselves republics, although their republican governments differ greatly. Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a president as head of state and a prime minister as head of government. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a body known as the Palestinian National Authority is laying the foundation of statehood for Arab Palestinians.

Elsewhere, powerful presidents rule in Egypt, Syria, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia. Military-based dictators govern Libya and Iraq. Iraq’s leader Saddam Hussein, for example, remains in power despite a UN trade embargo that has crippled Iraq’s economy.

In some countries, such as Algeria and Egypt, Islamist, or politically Islamic, groups have opposed secular, or non-religious, governments. Some of these movements have been successful. Under Shiite Muslim religious leaders, Iran’s Islamic government was set up in 1979 after a revolution toppled the country’s shah, or monarch.

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**TAKS Practice**

**Checking for Understanding**

1. Define domesticate, culture hearth, cuneiform, hieroglyphics, qanat, monotheism, prophet, mosque, nationalism, nationalize, embargo.

2. Main Ideas Re-create a web diagram like the one below, and write in the features of one of the major religions that began in Southwest Asia.

3. Drawing Conclusions Why was the domestication of plants and animals so important for the early peoples in the region?

4. Comparing and Contrasting How are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike, and how do they differ? Describe the similarities and differences.

5. Identifying Cause and Effect What are the main causes of conflict in the region today?

6. Place Study the map of Afghanistan on page 451. What challenges might military forces face in fighting a war there?

7. Expansion and Geography Look at the map of Muslim empires on page 449. Consider the physical geography of the region. Then write a paragraph explaining why the locations of the three empires are similar.

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452 Unit 6
Guide to Reading

Consider What You Know
As you have learned, North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia have diverse geographic features, climate zones, and ethnic groups. How might these aspects of the region affect its culture?

Read to Find Out
• How have religion and language both unified and divided the peoples of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia?
• What arts are popular in the region?
• What are some characteristics of everyday life in the region?

Terms to Know
• ziggurat
• bedouin
• bazaar

Places to Locate
• Qatar
• United Arab Emirates

Cultures and Lifestyles

A Geographic View

City of Tradition Meets the Modern World
Smoke and the fragrance of roasting quail float up from long-charcoal grills lining the perimeter of Suq el-Attarine, the Market of Scents in Alexandria, Egypt. . . . Along sidewalks men sit on benches. . . . Some play dominoes. Above us hang the purple flowers of jacaranda trees.

The tranquil scene recalls earlier times in the city that Alexander the Great founded more than 2,300 years ago. But as I stroll from the marketplace toward the harbor, I am clearly in a modern city. Apartment buildings . . . surround me. Traffic jams the streets. Supermarkets, cell phones, motorcycles, and teenagers in baseball caps are everywhere.

—Joel L. Swerdlow, “Tale of Three Cities,” National Geographic, August 1999

Everyday scenes in Alexandria, Egypt, and elsewhere in the region reflect both tradition and change. In this section you will look at aspects of culture that have long shaped the lives and experiences of peoples in the region. You will also consider how the peoples of the region balance tradition and change in their daily lives.

Religion
Religion both unifies and divides the peoples of the region. The great majority of the people are Muslims. Most belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, which believes that leadership should be in the hands of the
Islamic community at large. In Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and parts of Syria and Lebanon, however, most Muslims follow the Shia branch of Islam. The Shia, or Shiites, believe that only Muhammad’s descendants should lead the Islamic community.

Although Judaism and Christianity originated in the region, their followers make up only a small percentage of the population. Most Jews in the area live in Israel. Christians predominate in Armenia and Georgia, and large groups of Christians also live in Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria.

Languages

As Islam spread across the region, so did the Arabic language. Non-Arab Muslims learned Arabic in order to read Islam’s holy book, the Quran. As more people became Muslims, Arabic became the region’s main language. Other major languages in the region include Hebrew in Israel, Berber in southern Morocco and Algeria, and Turkish in Turkey. The languages of the Iranians, the Afghanis, and the Kurds include Farsi, Pashto, and Kurdish, respectively. Turkic languages are spoken in most of Central Asia.

The Arts

From earliest times, the peoples of the region have expressed themselves through the arts and architecture. Architects, artists, and writers later found inspiration in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Today the region’s cultural expressions reflect the influence of both East and West.

Art and Architecture

The region’s early civilizations created sculptures, fine metalwork, and buildings. In Mesopotamia the Sumerians built large, mud-brick temples called ziggurats, which were shaped like pyramids and
rose above the flat landscape. The Egyptians built towering pyramids from massive stone blocks to serve as royal tombs. The Persians erected great stone palaces decorated with beautiful textiles.

Mosques and palaces are the best-known examples of Islamic architecture. Because Islam discourages depicting living figures in religious art, Muslim artists work in geometric patterns and floral designs. They also use calligraphy, or elaborate writing, for decoration. Passages from the Quran adorn the walls of many mosques.

**Literature**

Based on a strong oral tradition, epics and poetry are the region’s dominant literary forms. The epic *Shahnameh (King of Kings)* describes heroic events in early Persian history. The *Rubaiyat* by the Persian poet Omar Khayyam is one of the few world masterpieces that has been translated into most languages. *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin,* a Georgian epic by the writer Shota Rustaveli, paints a picture of brave warriors and their battles during the reign of Georgia’s Queen Tamara. *The Thousand and One Nights,* a well-known collection of Arab, Indian, and Persian stories, reflects life in the early period of the Muslim empires.

Today rhythmic patterns in the region’s poetry show an increased Western influence. Much modern literature has nationalistic themes. Many writers also focus on the challenges of change in traditional society. Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, for example, defends his homeland’s traditional values against modernization. The Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz’s novels about Cairo’s recent past portray the conflicts between traditional village life and the new urban environment. In 1988 Mahfouz became the first winner of the Nobel Prize in literature whose native language is Arabic.

**Everyday Life**

The lives of people in Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Central Asia have changed dramatically in the last century. The population has grown rapidly with improved health care and a high birthrate. In most countries more than one-third of the population is under 15 years of age. Many people also have moved to urban areas. For example, less than 50 percent of North Africans and Southwest Asians still cultivate the land, and only a small percentage are bedouins (BEH•duh•wuhnz), or desert nomads. Contact with other regions of the world through travel, trade, and the Internet is also changing lifestyles. Even so, cherished customs and traditions survive. Daily life still revolves around family, home, education, religion, and recreation.

**Home and Community**

In the region’s largest cities, many people live in high-rise apartments. In the older parts of cities, however, people may live in stone or mud-brick buildings hundreds of years old. Similarly, many rural people in North Africa and Southwest Asia reside in stone or wooden structures. Some of these dwellings still lack running water or electricity.

Many families are very close-knit, often gathering at midday for their main meal. The menu might feature grains such as wheat and barley as well as...
fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. Meat, especially lamb or mutton, is also a part of the diet of most of the region’s peoples.

Rural dwellers often depend on their own farms or the village market for food. City dwellers can shop at supermarkets, but the bazaar is still popular. This traditional marketplace is a bustling area ranging from a single street of stalls to an entire district in a large city. The bazaar of Istanbul, for example, extends along miles of passageways:

“Sizzling hot kebabs give off an aroma... The pounding of the hammer on copper pots assails our ears... Merchants... wave and call out hoping to lure us into their shops. Lights make the glass, beads, and brass trays sparkle. The dimly lit twisting streets and alleys that curve off into the unknown add a... sense of adventure.”


**Economics**

**Standards of Living**

Standards of living vary widely across the region and even within countries. Urbanized countries with economies based on oil production or manufacturing and trade have relatively high standards of living. In Israel and Qatar, for example, the majority of people have access to the material goods they need. They can also afford additional goods that they want. Some oil-rich countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, are so prosperous that they have labor shortages and depend on foreign workers from India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and other countries.

In developing countries, however, much of the population does not share in the benefits of the available natural resources. Population growth in countries such as Egypt and Afghanistan has surpassed the ability of their economies to meet citizens’ needs. Prosperity and poverty often exist alongside each other. For example, cellular phones and foreign cars may be a common sight in Azerbaijan’s capital of Baku, but many other Azeris live in poverty.

**Education and Health Care**

Most young people in the region attend school. Primary education is free, and enrollment is increasing. Many students now complete both primary and secondary school, and a small percentage attend university. Eighteen of the region’s 28 countries have literacy rates above 75 percent; in 10 countries, more than 90 percent of the people can read and write. Before 1979, when revolution in Iran established an Islamic government, less than 50 percent of Iranians could read or write; today, 79 percent can. Women have advanced especially in education, now making up fully half of new university admissions.
In recent decades health care also has improved and expanded in the region. People needing medical treatment usually go to government-owned hospitals. In wealthier countries, the hospital stay is often free, but doctor shortages in the rural areas of many countries mean that treatment is available mainly in large towns and cities. So despite improvements, average life expectancies have remained low in much of the region.

**Celebrations and Leisure Time**

Calls to worship occur five times each day in countries with large Muslim populations. A muezzin, or crier, calls the faithful to prayer from the minaret, or tower, of each local mosque. Men gather in rows on the mosque’s mats or carpets after leaving their shoes at the entrance. Following the movements of the imam, or prayer leader, they bow and kneel, touching their foreheads to the ground in the direction of the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia.

Religious holidays and observances often bring family and community together. Many Muslims mark Id al Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, by making a pilgrimage to Makkah. They also observe Ramadan, a holy month of fasting from dawn to dusk ordained by the Quran. Yom Kippur, the Jews’ most solemn holy day, is also a time of fasting and prayer. Passover and Hanukkah are other important holy days for Jews. Christians observe the holy days of Christmas and Easter, with special services at the places associated with Jesus’ life.

People also visit with family members during their leisure time, often daily. Simple activities such as watching television or going to the movies bring young and old together. Soccer matches draw many spectators, and hunting and fishing are also popular. Board games such as backgammon and chess amount to unofficial national pastimes in countries like Armenia.

Interpretations of Islamic law have prevented Muslim women in some countries from fully participating in certain public activities such as sports. Some Muslim women, however, have begun to protest these restrictions. For example, women gather daily in Tehran’s Mellat Park for a morning aerobic session, but in public places they must cover themselves completely. In sports where such dress is not practical, women perform in separate areas where the only spectators are female. Today Iranian women are active in many sports, including skiing, bodybuilding, shooting, and soccer. Their enthusiasm helped launch the first Islamic Women’s Games in Tehran in 1993. Women competing in the games represented many predominantly Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Yemen.
Learning the Skill

An electronic spreadsheet is a worksheet for numerical information. All spreadsheet programs follow the same basic design of rows and columns. Columns, arranged vertically, are assigned letters. Rows, arranged horizontally, are assigned numbers. The point where a column and a row intersect is called a cell. The cell’s position on the spreadsheet is labeled according to its column and row. For example, the cell at the intersection of Column A and Row 1 is labeled A1.

Spreadsheets use standard formulas to perform calculations using numbers in the cells. To create an equation using the standard formulas, you should first select the cell in which you want to display the results of your calculation. Here are some examples of equations you can build:

- **The equation** $= B4 + B5$ **applies a standard formula to add the values in cells** $B4$ **and** $B5$.
- **The equation** $= B5/B6$ **divides the value in cell** $B5$ **by the value in cell** $B6$.
- **An asterisk (*) signifies multiplication.** The equation $= (B7 * C4) + D4$ means you want to multiply the value in cell $B7$ by the value in cell $C4$, and then add the value in cell $D4$ to the total.

Because adding is the most common function of spreadsheets, most spreadsheet programs have an AutoSum key ($\sum$) that you can click on to place a sum in a highlighted cell.

Practicing the Skill

To practice using an electronic spreadsheet, follow these steps.

1. **Open a new spreadsheet file.**
2. **Enter the information in Columns A through E as shown above.**
3. **In cell C9, use the AutoSum function ($\sum$) to calculate total population in millions for North Africa.**
4. **Print your results and share them with the class.**

Use the information on pages 414–416 to develop a spreadsheet on the land area and population for all countries in the region. Use the AutoSum function to create calculations showing the total land area and the total number of people in the region. Then create an equation to calculate the population density of the entire region.
SUMMARY & STUDY GUIDE

SECTION 1
Population Patterns (pp. 439–443)

Terms to Know
- ethnic diversity
- infrastructure

Key Points
- Movement and interaction of people have created the region’s ethnic diversity.
- The largest concentrations of population are in coastal and river valley areas where water is readily available.
- Urbanization has caused increased pollution and overcrowding, challenges that cities and regional governments are addressing in many ways.

Organizing Your Notes
Use a cause-and-effect chart like the one below to help reinforce your understanding of how change affects population patterns in the region.

Terms to Know
- domesticate
- culture hearth
- cuneiform
- hieroglyphics
- qanat
- monotheism
- prophet
- mosque
- nationalism
- nationalize
- embargo

SECTION 2
History and Government (pp. 446–452)

Terms to Know
- domesticate
- culture hearth
- cuneiform
- hieroglyphics
- qanat
- monotheism
- prophet
- mosque
- nationalism
- nationalize
- embargo

Key Points
- Early peoples in the region were among the first to domesticate plants and animals.
- Two of the world’s earliest civilizations arose in Mesopotamia and the Nile River valley.
- Three of the world’s major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—trace their origins to Southwest Asia.
- After centuries of foreign rule, independent states arose in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia during the 1900s.

Organizing Your Notes
Create an outline using the format below to help you organize important details from this section.

SECTION 3
Cultures and Lifestyles (pp. 453–457)

Terms to Know
- ziggurat
- bedouin
- bazaar

Key Points
- Islam and the Arabic language have been unifying forces in much of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia.
- Many people in the region speak Arabic. Other major languages in the region include Hebrew, Berber, Greek, Farsi, Pushtu, Kurdish, and various Turkic languages.
- The peoples of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia have expressed themselves from the earliest times through the arts and architecture.
- Tradition, especially religious observance, plays an important role in everyday life in the region.

Organizing Your Notes
Use a graphic organizer like the one below to fill in examples of the role tradition plays in different aspects of everyday life in the region.
Critical Thinking

1. Comparing and Contrasting How are Armenians and Georgians similar? Different?

2. Predicting Consequences How might the impact of new technologies affect the region’s ways of life?

3. Categorizing Information Create a web diagram like the one below to explain reasons for varying standards of living in the region.

Reviewing Key Terms

Match the following terms with their definitions.

a. cuneiform e. monotheism
b. culture hearth f. ziggurat
c. hieroglyphics g. bedouin
d. qanat h. bazaar

1. center where cultures developed and from which ideas and traditions spread outward
2. form of picture writing
3. writing system developed by the Sumerians
4. belief in one God
5. large, mud-brick temple shaped like a pyramid
6. traditional public marketplace
7. desert nomad
8. underground canal

Reviewing Facts

SECTION 1

1. What groups of people live in the region?
2. How has urbanization affected cities in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia?

SECTION 2

3. What physical features allowed areas in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley to become culture hearths?
4. What basic idea is shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?
5. In which areas of Israel do the Palestinians want an independent state of their own?

SECTION 3

6. How do religion and language influence the region’s cultures?
7. How does tradition blend with modern ways in everyday life?
Using the Regional Atlas
Refer to the Regional Atlas on pages 410–413.

1. **Location** Where do most people in Turkey live? What accounts for this pattern?

2. **Place** Which countries’ capitals have populations of more than 5 million?

Thinking Like a Geographer
Think about how language both unites and divides the region’s peoples. Prepare a map of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia, using different colors to show specific language areas. Use one color for areas where Arabic is the main language, another for Turkish and Turkic languages, and a third color for Farsi-related languages. As a geographer, what might you suggest to improve communication within the region?

Problem-Solving Activity
**Group Research Project** Working in a small group, simulate a meeting of delegates from four or five oil-producing countries. Each group member should research and report to the group on his or her country’s oil production, oil revenues, and ways the revenues should be spent. Group members should then work together to create a chart or a graph to present the information to the class.

**GeoJournal**
**Descriptive Writing** Use details from your journal to write a descriptive paragraph about one of the culture groups of North Africa, Southwest Asia, or Central Asia. Share your paragraph with the class.

**Technology Activity**
**Using E-Mail** Search the Internet for the e-mail address of a museum or university in one of the region’s countries. Compose and send an e-mail message requesting information about some aspect of the country’s culture, such as architecture, religion, art, or language. Write a short report from the response you receive.

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The following question refers to the accompanying quotation. Read the quotation carefully and then answer the question.

"Censorship in Saudi Arabia is even more overt. Under a system that took two years to develop, all Internet connections in the country have been routed through a hub outside Riyadh, where high-speed government computers block access to thousands of sites catalogued on a rapidly expanding blacklist."


1. Which of the following statements CANNOT be inferred about Saudi Arabia from the excerpt above?

   F There is a great amount of censorship in Saudi Arabia.

   G People in Saudi Arabia are not interested in technology.

   H The Saudi Arabian government feels threatened by the impending technological revolution.

   J Many Internet sites are off-limits in Saudi Arabia.