Business district at dusk, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Man gazing out across the vast expanses of the Sahara
Ancient Egyptian pyramids overlook industrial smokestacks. Three-thousand-year-old stone temples tower over sparkling new oil derricks. Remote mountain villages and endless desert seas of sand and gravel contrast with modern beaches overrun by tourists. All of these extremes can be found within the culture region of North Africa and Southwest Asia.
Lying at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa, this sprawling region has long been a meeting place for diverse peoples and cultures. Troubled by bitter conflicts and plagued by a scarcity of water, the region is also extremely rich in oil and other natural resources.

**The Land**

Glance at a physical map of North Africa and Southwest Asia and you will see a jumble of mountain chains. In the west, the Atlas Mountains—Africa’s longest range—run through Morocco and Algeria. Slanting southeast through Turkey and Iran are the Zagros Mountains, where earthquakes often occur. Farther east in Afghanistan are the Hindu Kush—a lofty mountain range that is shared with neighboring Pakistan to the east. The Khyber Pass cuts through the Hindu Kush. The Pass has been used for centuries as a trade route linking Southwest Asia to other parts of Asia.

Seas of Sand  Mountains block moist winds, helping to create vast deserts across much of the region. The Sahara, in North Africa, is the world’s largest hot desert. It covers an area about the size of the continental United States. The Rub’ al Khali, or Empty Quarter, covers about one-fourth of the Arabian Peninsula. The Empty Quarter has mountains of sand that reach heights of more than 1,000 feet (305 m).

**Vital Waterways**  Through these very dry landscapes flow great rivers that bring life-giving water. The world’s longest river, the Nile, runs 4,160 miles (6,693 km) through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow southeast through Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. The earliest civilizations arose near these rivers.

**The Climate**

Water is precious in much of this region. Most areas receive a meager 10 inches (25 cm) or less of rainfall each year. In such dry lands, agriculture is only possible in limited areas. Crops grow along rivers and irrigation canals or in places where natural springs bubble to the surface to create lush but isolated oases.

In areas with a steppe climate, where enough rain falls to support grasses, people raise livestock such as sheep, camels, and goats. Steppes cover parts of many Southwest Asian countries. A narrow band of steppe runs along the northern edge of the Sahara too.
Nile River flowing through Aswan, Egypt
The areas that border the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian Seas enjoy a milder Mediterranean climate. Although summers are hot and dry, the winter months bring enough precipitation to turn coastal lowlands into green landscapes.

The Economy

Like water, natural resources are distributed unevenly across North Africa and Southwest Asia. This helps to create great differences in living standards. The region includes some of the world’s wealthiest nations—and some of the world’s poorest.

An Oil-Rich Region

Enormous reserves of oil and natural gas lie in certain areas, including lands in central North Africa, along the Persian Gulf, and around the Caspian Sea. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which export petroleum products to fuel-hungry societies, generally enjoy high standards of living. Money from oil exports has helped to build skyscrapers, modern freeways, schools, and hospitals.

Farming and Herding

In contrast, those countries with economies based on agriculture have much lower standards of living. Only a small percentage of the region’s land is suitable for growing crops. In river valleys and along the coasts, where there is water and fertile soil, farmers raise citrus fruits, grapes, dates, grains, and cotton. Nomadic herding is common across the large expanses of this region that are too dry for crops.

The People

Great pyramids, built as tombs for Egyptian rulers, rise above desert sands. They are a reminder that some of the world’s oldest civilizations developed in this region. Roughly 5,000 years ago, the ancient Egyptians built a kingdom along the life-giving Nile River. The Sumerian civilization, an even older society, flourished in the fertile valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Arabs all have left their mark on the cultures of North Africa and Southwest Asia.

Ancient Cities—Modern Challenges

Water still dictates where people settle in this region. Most cities lie along seacoasts or rivers, or near desert oases. Among the largest cities are Cairo, Egypt; Istanbul, Turkey; and Tehran, Iran. These cities and others have been growing rapidly as...
villagers move to them in search of a better life. As a result, governments must work to find solutions to the problems of overcrowding, poverty, and pollution.

**Ethnic and Religious Rivalries** In North Africa and Southwest Asia, most of the people are Arabs. Many other ethnic groups also live in the region. This situation has sparked violent clashes. Despite the ethnic rivalries, many who live here are united by religion. Most people practice Islam, which developed in this region centuries ago. Two other major religions, Judaism and Christianity, also began here. The country of Israel is the Jewish national homeland. Differences among religions, however, have contributed to conflicts in places such as Israel and the West Bank, Lebanon, and Iraq.

![Desert dwellers sharing a meal, Saudi Arabia](image)
North Africa and Southwest Asia

**Physical**

- Lambert Azimuthal Equal-Area projection
- 1,000 mi. 0 km

**Oceanic Features**
- Atlantic Ocean
- Indian Ocean
- Mediterranean Sea
- Red Sea
- Persian Gulf
- Gulf of Aden
- Gulf of Oman
- Strait of Gibraltar

**Mountain Ranges**
- Atlas Mountains
- Taurus Mts.
- Zagros Mountains
- Hindu Kush
- Elburz Mts.
- Mt. Ararat: 16,945 ft. (5,165 m)
- Mt. Nowshak: 24,551 ft. (7,483 m)

**Countries and Regions**
- Morocco
- Algeria
- Libya
- Tunisia
- Egypt
- Turkey
- Iran
- Afghanistan
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Israel
- United Arab Emirates
- Saudi Arabia
- Yemen
- Oman
- Qatar
- Bahrain

**Other Features**
- Nile R.
- Tigris R.
- Euphrates R.
- Aswan High Dam
- Khyber Pass
- Syrian Desert
- Hejaz
- Asir
- Sinai Pen.
- Arabian Sea
- Strait of Gibraltar
- Sinai Peninsula
- Arabian Peninsula
- Plateau of Iran
- Taurus Mts.
- Zagros Mts.
- Atlas Mountains
- Hindu Kush
- Elburz Mts.
- Plateau of Iran
- Mt. Ararat: 16,945 ft. (5,165 m)
- Mt. Nowshak: 24,551 ft. (7,483 m)

**Geographic Features**
- Tropic of Cancer
- Tropic of Capricorn
- Sea level
- 2,000 m
- 4,000 m
- 6,000 m
- 8,000 m

**Scale**
- 0 mi. 1,000
- 0 km 1,000
- Lambert Azimuthal Equal-Area projection
1. What physical feature covers much of North Africa?
2. What is the capital of Saudi Arabia?
To what areas of the world are oil products from Southwest Asia shipped?

What oil regions supply oil products to Russia?
1. HIGHEST POINT
   Mt. Nowshak
   (Afghanistan–Pakistan border)
   24,551 ft. (7,483 m) high

2. LOWEST POINT
   Dead Sea
   (Israel and Jordan)
   1,349 ft. (411 m) below sea level

3. LONGEST RIVER
   Nile River
   4,160 mi. (6,693 km) long

4. LARGEST LAKE
   Caspian Sea
   143,244 sq. mi. (371,000 sq. km)

5. LARGEST DESERT
   Sahara (northern Africa)
   3,475,000 sq. mi. (9,000,208 sq. km)

GRAPHIC STUDY
1. The lowest point on the earth is found in this region. Where is it?
2. How does the population of Cairo compare to that of Tehran? How does the population of Ankara compare to that of Cairo?

COMPARING POPULATION:
United States and Selected Countries of North Africa and Southwest Asia

UNITED STATES

EGYPT

ALGERIA

SAUDI ARABIA

ISRAEL


URBAN POPULATIONS:
Selected Cities of North Africa and Southwest Asia

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

TEHRAN, IRAN

CAIRO, EGYPT

ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT

ANKARA, TURKEY

Country Profiles

AFGHANISTAN
- Population: 28,700,000
- 114 per sq. mi.
- 44 per sq. km
- Languages: Pashto, Dari
- Major Exports: Fruits and Nuts
- Major Import: Foods
- Capital: Kabul
- Landmass: 251,772 sq. mi.

ALGERIA
- Population: 31,700,000
- 35 per sq. mi.
- 14 per sq. km
- Languages: Arabic, French, Berber
- Major Export: Petroleum
- Major Import: Machinery
- Capital: Algiers
- Landmass: 919,591 sq. mi.

BAHRAIN
- Population: 700,000
- 2,545 per sq. mi.
- 983 per sq. km
- Language: Arabic
- Major Export: Petroleum
- Major Import: Machinery
- Capital: Manama
- Landmass: 266 sq. mi.

IRAN
- Population: 66,600,000
- 106 per sq. mi.
- 41 per sq. km
- Languages: Persian, Kurdish
- Major Export: Petroleum
- Major Import: Machinery
- Capital: Tehran
- Landmass: 630,575 sq. mi.

ISRAEL
- Population: 6,700,000
- 825 per sq. mi.
- 319 per sq. km
- Languages: Hebrew, Arabic
- Major Export: Polished Diamonds
- Major Import: Chemicals
- Capital: Jerusalem
- Landmass: 8,131 sq. mi.

KUWAIT
- Population: 2,400,000
- 346 per sq. mi.
- 134 per sq. km
- Language: Arabic
- Major Export: Petroleum
- Major Import: Foods
- Capital: Kuwait
- Landmass: 6,880 sq. mi.

LEBANON
- Population: 5,500,000
- 8 per sq. mi.
- 3 per sq. km
- Language: Arabic
- Major Export: Crude Oil
- Major Import: Machinery
- Capital: Beirut
- Landmass: 6,415 sq. mi.

LIBYA
- Population: 30,700,000
- 178 per sq. mi.
- 69 per sq. km
- Languages: Arabic, French, Berber
- Major Export: Manufactured Goods
- Major Import: Machinery
- Capital: Tripoli

EGYPT
- Population: 72,100,000
- 186 per sq. mi.
- 72 per sq. km
- Language: Arabic
- Major Export: Crude Oil
- Major Import: Machinery
- Capital: Cairo
- Landmass: 386,660 sq. mi.

KUWAIT
- Population: 2,400,000
- 346 per sq. mi.
- 134 per sq. km
- Language: Arabic
- Major Export: Petroleum
- Major Import: Foods
- Capital: Kuwait
- Landmass: 6,880 sq. mi.

MAJOR EXPORTS:
- Fruits and Nuts
- Petroleum
- Paper
- Crude Oil
- Foods
- Manufactured Goods

MAJOR IMPORTS:
- Machinery
- Foods
- Chemicals
- Crude Oil
- Machinery

Countries and flags not drawn to scale

* Israel has proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital, but many countries’ embassies are located in Tel Aviv.
* Morocco claims the Western Sahara area, but other countries do not accept this claim.
For more information on countries in this region, refer to the Nations of the World Data Bank in the Appendix.

**Religious Tolerance** In Southwest Asia, there are holy places of many religions, including temples, shrines, tombs, and mosques. Because Muslims are forbidden to worship statues or images, in some Islamic countries officials have destroyed ancient shrines and statues revered by Hindus or Buddhists.

1. Who owns religious properties in the United States?
2. Do you think government officials have a responsibility to protect valuable and sacred objects of all religions?

**WRITE ABOUT IT**

Write a short script that could be read by a television news broadcaster. The script should report on the destruction of a holy site by members of another religion. Present both points of view.

▲ Destroyed Buddhist statue in Afghanistan
To learn more about the people and places of North Africa and Southwest Asia, view The World and Its People Chapters 16 and 17 videos.

Chapter Overview Visit The World and Its People Web site at twip.glencoe.com and click on Chapter 16—Chapter Overviews to preview information about North Africa and Southwest Asia.
**Compare-Contrast** Make and use this foldable to help you determine how Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt were similar and different.

**Step 1** Fold a sheet of paper from side to side, leaving a 2-inch tab uncovered along the side.

**Step 2** Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.

**Step 3** Unfold and cut along the two inside fold lines.

**Step 4** Label your foldable as shown.

**Reading and Writing** As you read the chapter, write what you learn about these ancient civilizations under the tabs. Be sure to list similarities and differences under the appropriate tabs.

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**Civilizations and Religions Emerge**

Two of the world’s first civilizations arose in Southwest Asia and North Africa about 5,000 years ago. The development of cities led to governments, laws, and trade. Organized religions emerged. These religions had the power to unite people, but also to create terrible conflict. The events that occurred centuries ago in the “birthplace of civilization” still influence our lives today.
Egypt, in North Africa, and Mesopotamia (MEH•suh•puh•TAY•mee•uh), in Southwest Asia, were the earliest known civilizations. Historians use the term civilization to describe highly developed cultures. Civilizations include cities, organized governments and religions, and systems of writing. They have specialized workers, such as blacksmiths, builders, and teachers. Civilizations also use technology and metals. The time of the earliest civilizations is known as the Bronze Age, because people relied on the metal bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, to make tools and weapons.

Mesopotamia

Where were the first cities located? Where was the first school? These developments took place in Mesopotamia, a word that means “between the rivers.” As the map on page 467 shows, Mesopotamia was located between the Tigris River and the Euphrates River. This
region was part of the Fertile Crescent, a crescent-shaped area of rich soil that curved from the **Mediterranean Sea** to the **Persian Gulf**.

Around 4500 B.C., wandering peoples began settling along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. There they farmed the fertile soil left behind by yearly floods. To help control the floods, farmers built dirt walls and an irrigation system of ditches to channel the water to their fields of barley, wheat, and fruit trees. A 12-month calendar, based on phases of the moon, was developed to better predict the coming of the floodwaters. The plow was used for the first time, which made it possible to grow more food with less effort. With a steady food supply, the population grew larger.

**Sumer**  In time, the Mesopotamians built cities, some of which eventually held up to 40,000 people. Each city was considered a small state, or nation. The **city-state** of this time was made up of the city and the farmland around it. Walls made from sun-dried bricks surrounded and protected the cities.

The earliest city-states arose in an area called **Sumer**, where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flowed closest to each other. The Sumerians grew wealthy from trade. They exchanged dried fish, wool, barley, wheat, and metal goods for copper, tin, and timber. They invented many things, including the wheel, which helped transportation. The Sumerians also invented the sailboat, which replaced muscle power with wind power. Sumerian traders traveled by land to the Mediterranean in the west and by sea to India in the east.

**Religion and Government**  At the center of each city was a large, step-like tower called a ziggurat (ZIH•guh•RAT). Long stairways on the outside of the ziggurat led to a temple at the top. The temple was believed to be the home of the city’s chief god or goddess. Only priests and priestesses were allowed to enter the temple.

Mesopotamia’s religion was based on **polytheism**, or the worship of many gods and goddesses instead of just one god. At first, each city-state was a **theocracy**, or a government controlled by religious leaders. Mesopotamians believed that their priest-rulers received the right to rule from the gods. As the city-states grew, however, they fought one another over land and water. Military leaders became powerful and soon took the place of priests as permanent kings.

**First Systems of Writing**  The Sumerians were the first people to write down laws and keep lists and records. They created a form of writing known as **cuneiform** (kyoo•NEE•uh•FAWRM). It was made
up of hundreds of markings shaped like wedges. The Sumerians wrote with sharp-ended reeds on moist, clay tablets. These records became permanent after the tablets were baked in the sun.

The Sumerians taught writing in schools called tablet houses. Only the wealthy could afford to send their sons—and sometimes daughters—to these schools. There, students trained to become scribes, or writers who made lists, kept records, and wrote letters for officials.

Sumerian scribes are believed to have written the world’s first known story—the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In this story, a king named Gilgamesh and his friend travel the world performing great acts of bravery. When his friend dies, Gilgamesh searches for a way to live forever. He learns that only the gods can live forever. Part of the Gilgamesh story tells of a great flood that covered the earth. The account of the flood is very much like the story of Noah’s ark in the Bible.

**Akkad and Babylon** About 2300 B.C., the warlike kingdom of Akkad conquered Sumer and several other city-states. Akkad’s King Sargon created the first *empire*, or group of states under one ruler. Over time, the Akkadian Empire weakened. It finally fell to the kingdom of *Babylon* in about 1800 B.C.

Babylon’s greatest king was Hammurabi (HA•muh•RAH•bee). A great conqueror, Hammurabi pushed the boundaries of his empire to the Mediterranean Sea. He built temples and irrigation canals. He also encouraged trade and new ideas. During this golden age, the Babylonians developed a number system based on 60. From them, we borrowed the 60-minute hour, 60-second minute, and 360-degree circle.

**Hammurabi’s Code** Before Hammurabi’s rule, each city-state in Mesopotamia had its own codes, or collections of laws. Hammurabi took what he believed were the best laws from each code. He put these together and then issued one code that would apply to everyone in the empire. The Code of Hammurabi covered almost every aspect of daily life, including trade, debts, property, and family. Its basic idea was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” This meant that if one person wronged another, he or she would be punished in the same way. Hammurabi had his laws carved in stone and placed where people could read them. Thus, everyone knew the rules and the punishments. The Code of Hammurabi served as a basis for future codes of law.

**A New Babylon** After Hammurabi’s death, his empire split into smaller territories. Centuries later, during the 500s B.C., a new Babylonian empire rose and fell. It was ruled by a warrior people called the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar (NEH•buh•kuhd•NEH•zuhr), the greatest Chaldean king, rebuilt the city of Babylon and made it a center of trade and culture. Magnificent palaces and temples emerged. The royal palace was known for its “hanging gardens.” These were layered beds of earth with large trees and flowering vines that seemed to hang in mid-air. According to legend, Nebuchadnezzar built the gardens to please his wife, who missed the mountains and plants of her native land.
Phoenicians As the peoples of Mesopotamia warred with neighboring states, they also traded. This helped to spread ideas and cultures. Among the most important traders were the Phoenicians, who were located mainly in what is today Lebanon. By about 1200 B.C., the Phoenicians had sailed as far as southern Europe and around the southern tip of Africa. They also became known for their alphabet, a set of symbols that represents the sounds of a language. To keep trade records, the Phoenicians made use of symbols, or letters, from which any number of words could be formed. The Phoenician alphabet eventually gave rise to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin alphabets still in use today.

Egypt—Gift of the Nile

Like Mesopotamia, Egypt developed in a river valley. Egyptian civilization arose along the Nile River in northeast Africa. The Nile is the world’s longest river. It flows north 4,160 miles (6,693 km) from the mountains of East Africa to the Mediterranean Sea. The last 600 miles (960 km) are in Egypt. There the river cuts a narrow, green valley through the desert. Most ancient Egyptians lived near the river and its delta, or a fan-shaped fertile area, near the Mediterranean. For centuries, they farmed and were protected from invaders by the desert, the sea, and the Nile’s waterfalls called cataracts.

Egyptian civilization was in many ways “the gift of the Nile.” Egyptians depended on the Nile for their livelihood. Every year, about the middle of July, the Nile overflowed its banks. The floodwaters went down but left behind large amounts of rich soil good for growing crops.

History What were the biggest tombs called?
The Pharaoh Eventually, two kingdoms formed along the Nile—Upper Egypt to the south and Lower Egypt around the delta. About 3100 B.C., a king of Upper Egypt called Narmer moved north and conquered Lower Egypt, uniting the two kingdoms.

The Egyptian ruler had the title of pharaoh (FEHR•oh), which means “great house.” Like Mesopotamia, Egypt was a theocracy. Egyptians believed that their pharaoh was a god, however, as well as a ruler and priest. The pharaoh was the center of Egyptian life. He owned all the land in Egypt, and he gave gifts of land to rich Egyptians and priests. The pharaoh had dams and irrigation canals built and repaired. He chose government officials to gather taxes and carry out his orders. The pharaoh also commanded Egypt’s armies.

Religion Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses. Each stood for some part of nature. The most important gods were the sun god Re, the river god Hapi, and the sky god Horus. Another important god was Osiris, the god of the harvest and eternal life.

The Egyptians believed in a form of life after death. They thought that the soul could not exist without the body, however. To preserve the body after death, it was embalmed. This was a process in which priests first removed certain organs from the body. Then they slowly dried the body to prevent it from decaying. Next, the embalmed body was wrapped in long strips of linen. The wrapped body was known as a mummy. The mummies of poor people were usually buried in caves or the desert sand. Those of rich people were placed in coffins, often in very elaborate tombs along with fabulous treasures.

The largest tombs belonged to the pharaohs and were called pyramids. These massive tombs were designed to protect the pharaohs’ bodies from floods, wild animals, and robbers. Turn to page 472 to read about the largest pyramid—the Great Pyramid of Khufu. Great pharaohs—such as Khufu, Thutmose, and Ramses II—also were glorified with large monuments and statues. One such statue is the colossal Great Sphinx at Giza, which has the body of a lion and a human head.

Trade and Conquest Egypt conquered many lands during its long history. It also suffered defeats. In the 1700s B.C., invaders from Asia known as the Hyksos conquered Egypt. The Hyksos ruled for about 150 years until they were overthrown. From the Hyksos, the Egyptians learned to use bronze and iron weapons and horse-drawn chariots.

With this new military and transportation technology, Egypt sought gold and gems in the African kingdom of Kush, near present-day Sudan. The first female pharaoh, Hatshepsut, expanded trade even further. During her rule, Egyptian traders sailed along the coast of East Africa to the land of Punt (near present-day Somalia). There, they exchanged beads, metal tools, and weapons for hardwoods, incense, ivory, and other products. To the north, Egypt traded across the eastern Mediterranean with the Phoenicians and the Greeks. As they traded, the Egyptians spread ideas and accomplishments.
**Egyptian Writing**  The ancient Egyptians wrote using **hieroglyphics**. This was a form of writing in which pictures were used for words or sounds. The Egyptians carved and painted hieroglyphic characters on their monuments or on **papyrus** (puh•PY•ruhs). Papyrus is a plant that grows along the Nile. It was used to make a form of paper, and it is the root word for **paper**. In order to write on papyrus, the Egyptians also developed ink. The dry climate of Egypt preserved some writings so well that they can still be read today.

**Mathematics and Medicine**  The Egyptians made many other contributions to civilization. They used a number system based on ten. They also used fractions and whole numbers. They developed geometry to survey, or measure, land. The Nile’s regular cycle of flooding helped the Egyptians create a calendar.

In the field of medicine, the Egyptians were the first to use splints, bandages, and compresses. They were skilled at sewing up cuts and setting broken bones. They even had remedies for hair loss and indigestion.

**Decline**  Egypt eventually grew weak. The priests began to struggle with the pharaohs for power. In addition, much energy and money was spent trying to keep neighboring countries under Egyptian control. Egypt was eventually conquered by even greater empires—those of Greece and Rome.

**Reading Check**  How did the Egyptians view the pharaoh?

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**Section 1**

**Assessment**

**Defining Terms**
1. Define civilization, city-state, polytheism, theocracy, cuneiform, empire, delta, pharaoh, pyramid, hieroglyphics, papyrus.

**Recalling Facts**
2. History  What were two early forms of writing, and where did they develop?
3. Geography  Where did most Egyptians live? Why?
4. Math  What mathematical contributions did Egyptians make to civilization?

**Critical Thinking**
5. Drawing Conclusions  Why were the inventions of the wheel and the sailboat important to Sumer?
6. Understanding Cause and Effect  Why was Hammurabi’s code of laws an important development?

**Graphic Organizer**
7. Organizing Information  On a diagram like this one, list ways that the Nile River influenced Egypt.

**Applying Social Studies Skills**
8. Analyzing Maps  Look at the map on page 467. What do the locations of the towns have in common?
The Egyptian Pyramids

The ancient Egyptians viewed the pharaoh, or king, as the most important person on the earth. They believed he was a god who would continue to guide them after his death. A pyramid served as a tomb for the pharaoh and provided a place where the body would safely pass into the afterlife. Rooms inside the pyramid held food, clothing, weapons, furniture, jewels, and everything else the pharaoh might need in the afterlife.

The Great Pyramid at Giza

The largest of Egypt’s pyramids is the Great Pyramid of Khufu, built nearly 4,500 years ago. When the pyramid was new, it stood 482 feet (147 m) high. The square base of the pyramid covers 13 acres (about 5 ha). More than 2 million limestone and granite blocks were used in building it. These are no ordinary-sized blocks, however. The huge stones weigh an average of 2.5 tons (2.3 t) each.

Construction

For thousands of years, people have wondered how the Egyptians built the pyramids without modern tools or machinery. In the fifth century B.C., a Greek historian thought it took 100,000 people to build the Great Pyramid. Today archaeologists believe a workforce of about 20,000 did the job in about 20 years. Barges carried supplies and building materials for the pyramid down the Nile River. Nearby quarries supplied most of the stone. Skilled stonecutters carved the stones into the precise size and shape so that no mortar, or cementing material, was needed to hold the stones together.

Engineers think that workers built ramps and used papyrus twine to drag the huge stones to the pyramid. They formed ramps up all four sides of the pyramid and made the ramps higher and longer as the pyramid rose. They then dragged the stones up the ramps. Once finished, the ramps were cleared away. Then stonemasons smoothed and polished the stone, and the finished pyramid towered over the surrounding desert.

Making the Connection

1. Why did the Egyptians build the pyramids?
2. How many workers did ancient historians and modern archaeologists each estimate it took to build the Great Pyramid?
3. Sequencing Information Describe the process experts think Egyptians used to build the pyramids.
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have become major world faiths. All three religions are examples of monotheism, or the belief in one supreme god.

**Judaism**

Judaism is the oldest of these three world religions. It was first practiced by a small group of people in Southwest Asia called the Israelites. The followers of Judaism today are known as Jews. We know about the early history of the Jewish people and their religion from their holy book—the Torah.

According to Jewish belief, the Jews are descended from Abraham and Sarah, who first worshipped the one God, or Yahweh. Abraham was a herder who lived at least 3,700 years ago in what is now Iraq. The Torah states that God made a covenant, or agreement, with Abraham. If Abraham moved to the land of Canaan (Palestine), he...
would be blessed, and all nations would be blessed through him. Because of this covenant, Abraham’s Israelite descendants believed that they were God’s “chosen people” and would remain so as long as they followed God’s laws.

The Ten Commandments The most important of these laws are the Ten Commandments. Jews believe that God revealed the Ten Commandments to a prophet, or messenger of God, called Moses. According to the Torah, Moses led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. At the top of Mt. Sinai in the desert, Moses received the Ten Commandments. These rules differed from the laws of neighboring peoples because they were based on the worship of one god. The Israelites were to give their loyalty only to Yahweh. They were not to worship other gods or human-made images. Also, all people—whether rich or poor—were to be treated fairly.

The Jews About 1000 B.C., the Israelites under King David created a kingdom in the area of present-day Israel. The kingdom’s capital was Jerusalem. By 922 B.C., the kingdom had split into two states—Israel and Judah. The people of Judah came to be called Jews. In later centuries, the Jews would be conquered and forced to leave their homeland many times. Eventually, the Jewish people spread to countries in many parts of the world. This scattering of the Jews was called the Diaspora. In many areas, the Jews were cruelly treated. In some areas, they were treated with tolerance and understanding. Wherever they lived, Jewish thinkers, writers, artists, and scientists increased the world’s knowledge.

Judaism Today Despite hardships, the Jews have remained faithful to their religious heritage. They observe several important holy days. Every year during the festival of Passover, Jews retell the story of the exodus, or departure, of the Israelites from Egypt. Rosh Hashanah (rahsh huh•shah•nuh) is New Year’s Day on the Jewish calendar and is marked by prayer and solemn thoughts. Following Rosh Hashanah is Yom Kippur (yohm kih•pur), the holiest day in Judaism. Also called the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur is observed by a 24-hour period of prayer and fasting.

Reading Check What are the basic laws revealed to Moses known as?
Christianity

The traditions of Judaism gave rise to the monotheistic religion known as Christianity. Christianity started in Southwest Asia among the Jews. Later, it spread to non-Jews and became one of the major influences in Western civilization.

Jesus

Centuries after the rise of Judaism, a Jew named Jesus began preaching in what today is Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan. Jesus taught that God loved all people, even those who have sinned. He told people that if they placed their trust in God, they would be forgiven.

During Jesus’ lifetime, many Jews were opposed to the Romans who ruled their land. Some believed that God would send a messiah, or savior, to deliver them. In A.D. 30, Jesus and his disciples, or followers, went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, a Jewish holiday. Some Jews there greeted him as the messiah. This worried other Jews and Romans alike. Jesus was convicted of treason under Roman law and was crucified, or executed on a cross, outside Jerusalem. Soon afterward, the disciples proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to them. They began preaching that Jesus was the Son of God and that

**Comparing Scripture**

Although there are many differences between the world’s major religions, there are also many similarities. These quotes from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam illustrate the belief in good deeds.

*When the holy one loves a man, He sends him a present in the shape of a poor man, so that he should perform some good deed to him, through the merit of which he may draw a cord of grace.* The Torah; Genesis 104a

*He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none: and he who has food, let him do likewise.* The Bible; Luke 3:11

*Every person’s every joint must perform a charity every day the sun comes up: to act justly between two people is a charity. . . . a good word is a charity; every step you take in prayers is a charity. . . .* Saying of the Prophet Muhammad

Analyzing Primary Sources

All three religions share the message of helping others. Why do you suppose there has been such conflict among them?
anyone who believed in him and lived by his teachings would know eternal life after death. From then on, the disciples called him Christ, after the Greek word *Christos* (krees•TOS), meaning “messiah.”

**Spread of Christianity** The disciples spread the message of Jesus throughout the Mediterranean area and beyond. Jews and non-Jews who accepted this message became known as Christians. Stories about Jesus and early Christian writings—known as the New Testament—became part of the Christian Bible.

Until about A.D. 300, Christians faced persecution in the Roman Empire. Then the Roman emperor Constantine proclaimed that Christianity was to be a lawful religion. By A.D. 600, large areas of Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Europe were Christian. Disputes soon divided Christians into two major groups—Roman Catholics led by the pope in Italy, and Eastern Orthodox Christians who looked to the patriarch in Constantinople.

**Christianity Today** Christianity has more followers than any other religion. Three major groups—Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants—make up the Christian religion today. Christians mark important events in the life of Jesus. Christmas is the celebration of his birth. In the spring, Christians remember the last days of Jesus’ life on Earth. Good Friday is the day of Jesus’ crucifixion. Easter, believed to be the day Jesus rose from the dead, is the most important Christian holy day.

**Islam**

The third monotheistic religion from Southwest Asia is Islam. It began in the A.D. 600s in the Arabian Peninsula. In the Arabic language, *Islam* means “surrender” to the will of God, or Allah. The followers of Islam are called Muslims. They believe that Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet of Islam—following Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

**Muhammad** Muhammad was born about A.D. 570 in Makkah (Mecca), a trading city and religious center in western Arabia. Arab pilgrims came to worship at the Kaaba, a shrine that housed a sacred black stone. According to Islamic teachings, in A.D. 610 Muhammad heard the voice of the angel Gabriel calling him to preach about God. He told the people of Makkah that there is only one God, Allah, before whom all believers are equal. He urged the rich to share with the poor. Muhammad saw life as preparation for the Day of Judgment, or the day when God would punish evildoers and reward the just.

Muhammad’s message angered Makkah’s rich merchants. They began to make threats against Muhammad. In A.D. 622, Muhammad and several hundred followers traveled to Yathrib (now known as Madinah), a small town north of Makkah. Muhammad’s departure to Yathrib is known as the *Hijrah* (HIHJRUH), or migration.

In Madinah, Muhammad united the people politically and made them proud of their new faith. Armies from Makkah tried to capture
Madinah, but Muhammad’s forces were eventually able to defeat them. Muhammad made Makkah the center of Islam and dedicated the Kaaba to the worship of Allah. By the time of Muhammad’s death in A.D. 632, all of Arabia had accepted Islam. Muslim armies, merchants, and scholars began to spread Islam outside of Arabia. Over several centuries, a series of empires based on Islam ruled vast areas of Asia, North Africa, and parts of Europe.

As Islam spread, the religion branched into two main groups—Sunnis (SU•NEEZ) and Shiites (SHEE•EYETS). Most of the world’s Muslims are Sunni. In the countries of Iran and Iraq, however, most people are Shiites. Sunnis and Shiites differ on which leaders should rule in the Islamic community.

**The Quran** At the heart of Islam is the Quran (kuh•RAN), or the Muslim holy book. Muslims believe that the Quran is the direct word of Allah as given to Muhammad. The Quran presents the five pillars of faith, or the five obligations all Muslims must fulfill. The first duty is the confession, or statement, of faith: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.” Second, Muslims must pray five times each day, facing the holy city of Makkah. The third duty is to give charity to people in need or to institutions that are involved in education or social services. The fourth duty is to fast. This means not eating or drinking during the daylight hours of the holy month of Ramadan (RAH•muh•DAHN). This is the month, according to Muslim beliefs, in which God began to reveal the Quran to Muhammad.

The last pillar of faith is a pilgrimage. Once in each Muslim’s life, he or she must, if able, journey to Makkah to pray. This journey is called the hajj. The reward for fulfilling all these religious duties is paradise.

**Section Check** What is the Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah called?

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**Assessment**

**Defining Terms**

1. Define monotheism, covenant, prophet, messiah, disciple, five pillars of faith, hajj.

**Recalling Facts**

2. Religion What are the world’s three largest monotheistic religions?

3. History What was the Diaspora?

**Critical Thinking**

4. Making Comparisons How did the Ten Commandments differ from the religious laws of neighboring regions?

5. Summarizing Information What are the main holy days for each of the religions discussed in this section?

**Graphic Organizer**

6. Organizing Information Create a time line like the one below. List four key events in the foundation of Islam and their dates.

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**Applying Social Studies Skills**

7. Analyzing Primary Sources Read the quotes in the Primary Source feature on page 309. Summarize each quote in your own words.
Using Library Resources

Learning the Skill

Libraries contain many resources. Here are brief descriptions of important ones:

- **Encyclopedia:** set of books containing short articles on many subjects arranged alphabetically
- **Biographical Dictionary:** brief biographies listed alphabetically by last names
- **Atlas:** collection of maps and charts
- **Almanac:** reference updated yearly that provides current statistics and historical information on a wide range of subjects
- **Card Catalog:** listing of every book in the library, either on cards or on a computer database; search for books by author, subject, or title
- **Periodical Guide:** set of books listing topics covered in magazines and newspaper articles

Practicing the Skill

Suppose you are assigned a research report dealing with Islam. Read the questions below, and then decide which of the resources listed here you would use to answer each question and why.

1. During which years did Muhammad lead Muslims?
2. What is the current number of Muslims in the world today?
3. What was Muhammad’s early life like? What happened to the Islamic religion after he died?

Applying the Skill

Using library resources, research the achievements of early Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the areas of architecture, math, science, and/or medicine. Present the information you find to the class.

The Kaaba, Islam’s most sacred shrine, is in the courtyard of Makkah’s Grand Mosque.
**Chapter 16**

**Section 1**  
**Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt**

**Terms to Know**
- civilization  
- city-state  
- polytheism  
- theocracy  
- cuneiform  
- empire  
- delta  
- pharaoh  
- pyramid  
- hieroglyphics  
- papyrus  

**Main Idea**

*The peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt were among the first to build civilizations.*

- **History** The first civilizations developed in Mesopotamia, which was located in the Fertile Crescent.
- **History** Early advancements in Mesopotamia, Sumer, and Babylon were in farming, writing, and government.
- **Geography** The Egyptians depended on the Nile River for their livelihood.
- **History** Ancient Egypt is known for pharaohs, pyramids, hieroglyphics, and mummies.

**Section 2**  
**Three World Religions**

**Terms to Know**
- monotheism  
- covenant  
- prophet  
- messiah  
- disciple  
- five pillars of faith  
- hajj  

**Main Idea**

*Three of the world’s monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—developed in Southwest Asia.*

- **History** Judaism is the world’s oldest monotheistic religion. The Jews’ belief in one God was later shared by Christianity and Islam.
- **Religion** Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.
- **Religion** Muslims are followers of Islam. Muslims believe Allah is the one God, and Muhammad is the messenger.

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*Desert areas begin where the fertile Nile River Valley ends.*
Using Key Terms

Match the terms in Part A with their definitions in Part B.

A.
1. civilization
2. theocracy
3. cuneiform
4. pharaoh
5. polytheism
6. covenant
7. monotheism
8. hajj
9. disciple
10. city-state

B.
a. holy journey in Islam
b. follower
c. culture that has reached the level of development where people can specialize their skills
d. god-king of ancient Egypt
e. belief in many gods
f. belief in one God
g. ruled by religious leader who is also a king
h. ancient form of writing in Sumer
i. city and its surrounding countryside
j. agreement

Reviewing the Main Ideas

Section 1 Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt

11. History What was a ziggurat?
12. History Where did the earliest city-states arise?
13. History What was the world’s first known story?
14. History What concepts did we borrow from the Babylonians?
15. Culture For what two things are the Phoenicians known?
16. History Who were the Asians that invaded ancient Egypt? What technology did they share?
17. History Why did the Egyptians embalm their dead?

Section 2 Three World Religions

18. Religion What is the similarity between Yahweh and Allah?
19. Religion What is the role of the messiah in Jewish and Christian religious belief?
20. Religion Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are similar in their belief of one supreme god. List some of the differences among the three religions.

Place Location Activity

On a separate sheet of paper, match the letters on the map with the numbered places listed below.

1. Persian Gulf
2. Lower Egypt
3. Euphrates River
4. Mediterranean Sea
5. Nile River
6. Israel
7. Upper Egypt
8. Saudi Arabia
9. Makkah (Mecca)
10. Jerusalem
Critical Thinking

21. **Analyzing Information** Hammurabi wrote a code of laws to help him rule better. How would laws help a king rule?

22. **Categorizing Information** Create a chart like the one below. Complete the name of the holy book for each of the religions listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Holy Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing Regions Activity

23. **Culture** As you have learned, ancient Egyptians followed a polytheistic religion. The early Greeks did as well. Use the Internet to find information on ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses and classical Greek gods and goddesses. Create a chart to compare the gods and goddesses of each.

Mental Mapping Activity

24. **Focusing on the Region** Create a simple outline map of Egypt and Southwest Asia. Draw in the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates Rivers. Shade the areas where the early civilizations of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia were located. Label the cities of Giza, Jerusalem, Babylon, and Makkah (Mecca) on your map.

Technology Skills Activity

25. **Using the Internet** Search the Internet and find several newspapers that publish online. Use at least three different sources to research recent discoveries about any ancient cultures in the region of North Africa or Southwest Asia. Use the computer to create a report on this topic. You may want to include visual materials for display.

Test-Taking Tip: When you answer a map question, do *not* rely on your memory of the map. Instead, check each answer choice against the information on the map and get rid of answer choices that are incorrect. Eliminating even one wrong choice will help you locate the correct answer.