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UNIT NARRATIVE



In this unit, we explore the places where the earliest civilizations emerged: the Middle East (or Southwest Asia) and ancient Egypt. While uniquely different, these two civilizations have marked similarities. Both were located in the northeastern hemisphere, in hot and dry climates that were punishing to survival. Thus, both the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians found solstice in river valleys and utilized irrigation techniques to leverage the river and flood water for farming, drinking, and overall survival. Both civilizations contributed advancements to society that have forever changed our lives- including writing and timekeeping systems, laws for governing, and farming practices. And finally, while Mesopotamians practiced monotheism and Egyptians polytheism, both civilizations held sacred religious beliefs about life and the afterlife. By the end of this unit, students will have discovered the distinct qualities of ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, and considered the overlaps that connected the two.

## CONTENT STANDARDS

Southwest Asia and North Africa		Connected Knowledge and Skills 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.14, 6.15, 6.17	
6.3 Geography. The student understands the factors that influence the locations and characteristics of locations of various contemporary societies on maps and/or globes.			
Readiness Standards		Supporting Standards	
6.1(A)*	trace characteristics of various contemporary societies in regions that resulted from historical events or factors such as colonization, immigration, and trade	6.1(B)	analyze the historical background of various contemporary societies to evaluate relationships between past conflicts and current conditions
6.3(C)	identify and locate major physical and human geographic features such as landforms, water bodies, and urban centers of various places and regions	6.4(A)*	explain the geographic factors responsible for the location of economic activities in places and regions
6.3(D)*	identify the location of major world countries for each of the world regions	6.6(A)	describe ways in which the factors of production (natural resources, labor, capital, and entrepreneurs) influence the economies of various contemporary societies
6.4(B)*	identify geographic factors such as location, physical features, transportation corridors and barriers, and distribution of natural resources that influence a society's political relationships	6.6(B)	identify problems that may arise when one or more of the factors of production is in relatively short supply
6.5(B)*	identify and analyze ways people have adapted to the physical environment in various places and regions	6.9(C)	identify and describe examples of human rights abuses by limited or unlimited governments such as the oppression of religious, ethnic, and political groups
6.5(C)*	identify and analyze ways people have modified the physical environment such as mining, irrigation, and transportation infrastructure	6.13(D)*	identify and explain examples of conflict and cooperation between and among cultures
6.6(C)*	explain the impact of the distribution of resources on international trade and economic interdependence among and within societies	6.14(B)*	compare characteristics of institutions in various contemporary societies
6.7(A)*	compare ways in which various societies organize the production and distribution of goods and services	6.14(C)*	analyze the efforts and activities institutions use to sustain themselves over time
6.9(A)	describe and compare examples of limited and unlimited governments such as constitutional (limited) and totalitarian (unlimited)	6.15(B)*	identify and describe factors that influence cultural change such as improvements in communication, transportation, and economic development
6.15(D)*	identify the impact of cultural diffusion on individuals and world societies	6.15(C)*	analyze the impact of improved communication technology among cultures
		6.17(A)	explain the relationship among religious ideas, philosophical ideas, and cultures
		6.17(B)	explain the significance of religious holidays and observances such as ... Ramadan, the annual hajj, ... in various contemporary societies

## UNDERSTANDINGS AND QUESTIONS

### Key Understandings

- **Geography:** The early civilizations of Mesopotamia (in Southwest Asia/the Middle East) and Egypt settled along river valleys (the Fertile Crescent and the Nile River) due to the fertile soil and greater chance of survival.
- **Geography:** The river valleys of Mesopotamia and Egypt existed amidst a hot and dry climate and were surrounded by deserts. These deserts made survival difficult then as well as today as they are still expanding.
- **Religious Beliefs:** The first three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) emerged from the Middle East. Prior to these religions, ancient civilizations were polytheistic and worshiped many gods.
- **Religious Beliefs:** Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have much in common: they are monotheistic, all have a sacred text and moral code, all had prophets sent from God, and all emerged in the Middle East. They also have unique differences: their prophets, moral codes, and sacred texts are all different.
- **Culture/Society:** Both Mesopotamia and Egypt contributed many advancements that forever impacted culture and society, including the wheel, written languages such as cuneiform and hieroglyphs, the calendar, the pyramids, Hammurabi's Code, and irrigation systems.

## Key Questions

1. Where did early civilizations in Southwest Asia and the Middle East settle and why did they settle there?
2. What were the benefits and challenges of the geography in Southwest Asia and the Middle East?
3. What are the core beliefs of the 3 monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?
4. What do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have in common and how are they different?
5. What inventions and advancements did the civilizations of Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt contribute and how did they impact society?

## Unit Resources

**Student Workbook**

[Teacher Answer Key](#)

[Unit Assessment](#)

[Unit Assessment Answer Key](#)

## Unit Lesson Break-Down

Day 1 - Lesson 01: Introduction to the Middle East and North Africa (Part 1)

Day 2 - Lesson 01: Introduction to the Middle East and North Africa (Part 2)

Day 3 – Geographic Factors and Impact

Day 4 – Environmental Issues in the Region (Part 1)

Day 5 - Environmental Issues in the Region (Part 2)

Day 6 – Water Scarcity (Part 1)

Day 7 – Water Scarcity (Part 2)

Day 8 – History in the Middle East and North Africa

Day 9 – Cultural Diffusion and Change

Day 10 – Science and Technology

Day 11 – Teacher Planned Review Days

Day 12 – Teach Planned Review Days

Day 13 – Flex Days

Day 14 – Flex Days

Day 15 – Unit 5 Assessment

