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Oil at the Crossroads of History

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Oil at the Crossroads of History

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Grade Level: 6th- 9th

Purpose/Overview:

Students will discover the positive and negative effects of abundant oil reserves in the Middle East by making assumptions and drawing conclusions. Students will then choose a positive or negative effect and further examine their topic with research. They will prepare a brief persuasive essay to present at a class discussion or debate. These activities will also address PALS (Process and Literacy Skills).

National Geography Standards from *Geography for Life*

Geographic Elements & Standards:

Environment and Society --

14: How human actions modify the physical environment

15: How physical systems affect human systems

Oklahoma C³ Standards:

Grade 7 World Geography: Eastern Hemisphere

Literacy Skills Standard 2: The student will develop and demonstrate Common Core Social Studies writing literacy skills.

A.1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

Content Standard 2: The student will examine the human and physical characteristics of the major regions of the Eastern Hemisphere.

5. Explain and summarize how and why regions change over time through physical and human processes which operate to modify Earth's surface including the

D. Effects of abundant oil supplies in the Persian Gulf region.

Geographic Themes: Human/Environmental Interaction, Region

Objectives:

Students will know:

1. The areas which make up the region known as the Middle East
2. That this region contains 65% of the world's proven oil reserves
3. The physical processes that caused the oil to form in this region
4. The political, economic, environmental, and social impact of oil production in the region
5. The positive and negative effects of oil production in this region

Materials:

- Copies of Handout #1 -- Introduction
- Copies of Handout #2 -- Map of Oil Reserves

- Copies of Handout #3 -- “A Personal Perspective on the Middle East”
- Large political world wall map; wall map of the Middle East if available
- Access to the Internet for research

Time Frame: 1-2 class periods for the initial introduction, depending on length of class periods. It could be extended into a 3 to 4 class period unit if students develop the extensions suggested.

Procedures:

Introduction: Pass out Handout #1 and use it a springboard for a class discussion about the positive and negative effects of oil production. Students should keep notes on the handout. Allow about 5 minutes for this activity, just long enough for students to form some opinions. Pass out the Handout #2 "The World's Oil Reserves" and briefly discuss the map with students. Make sure they understand where the Middle East is and that it contains the largest percentage of the world's proven oil reserves. Use the wall map of the world if needed. Do not linger on map or brainstorm activities.

Develop the lesson: Pass out Handout #3 “A Personal Perspective on the Middle East.” Allow time for students to read it and briefly discuss it. For the remainder of the lesson, the students will focus on the positive and negative effects of oil production in the region. They must choose either a positive or negative effect and write a persuasive essay to support their views. Students may work independently or in pairs. ***Check Teacher's Notes for help.*** Remind students that they may choose a political, economical, social, or environmental effect. You may wish to write those four terms on the board and describe them briefly to help guide their thinking. Allow some time for students to discuss the negatives and positive effects in class before choosing a position. In the initial introduction to this lesson, students may make assumptions and draw conclusions before writing their persuasive essays. If time and computers are available, students may do some research to include in their arguments. If not, students may do the research later and prepare in-depth presentations on their points of view.

Use the tips in the following box to help your students understand the process of writing a persuasive essay.

Tips for writing a persuasive essay:

- 1) Choose a side, position, or topic and state it clearly.
- 2) Explain the important points that you want your audience to understand.
- 3) State facts or research to support your side or position if possible.
- 4) Present the facts in a manner or sequence that builds a strong argument for your side.
- 5) Create a strong conclusion intended to persuade.

Conclusion: Provide time for students to read or present their essays. Encourage discussion or debate on the effects. Compile the negative and positive effects on the chalkboard/white board or a large poster for further research and/or discussion. Reread Handout #3 “A Personal Perspective” aloud if there is time for further discussion.

Assessment:

Use the formative assessment technique called "3-2-1." Have students respond with specific information to the following prompts:

Three things I will remember from today's activities are....

Two things I did not understand or want to know more about are....

One thing that made the most impression on me about the effects of oil production in a region is....

NOTE:

Using this type of assessment helps both the students and the teacher determine the areas which students understood well and what areas need more work. It is less threatening to students while at the same time they are using their writing skills. It also addresses the Common Core Literacy Standard that requires students to "write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. USH8.2.0

Resources:

The CIA World Factbook - Middle East

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_mde.html

U.S. Energy Information Administration - Annual Energy Outlook 2012

<http://www.eia.gov/forecasts/aeo/>

Society of Petroleum Engineers - Classroom Resources

<http://www.energy4me.org/classroom-resources/>

Extension:

1. Invite representative of both oil production companies and environmental agencies to speak.
2. Do research on the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) as it relates to oil production in the United States.
3. Prepare a visual research-based presentation that shows how oil begins as a fossil fuel and is formed below the surface of the earth.
4. Each student may take a different Middle Eastern country and prepare a report on the effects of oil production in that country.
5. Investigate oil production in Oklahoma.

Teacher's Notes:

Below are a few examples of positive and negative effects of oil in the Middle East. Use them to help you guide students in their searches or for independent research papers.

POSITIVES

- ✓ **Oil is the major fuel that runs our industries, vehicles, and society in general.**
- ✓ **The oil boom helped create a middle class in many countries including United States.**
- ✓ **Oil helped create very wealthy societies in the Middle Eastern countries.**
- ✓ **Oil production led to the creation of other related industries and more jobs in the Middle East and elsewhere (e.g., oil exploration & drilling, transportation, refining, sales, and advertising).**

- ✓ **Wealth created by oil production has led to investments in research and development in areas such as medicine, science and technology.**
- ✓ **Oil is used in the manufacturing of many products: paint, tires, soap, clothes, food preservatives, roofing products, some medicines, plastics and refrigerants.**
- ✓ **The expectation of the eventual depletion of oil has led to research in other types of energy, such as wind, solar, and biofuels.**
- ✓ **Many people are employed in oil-related industries providing income for the economies of many nations around the world.**
- ✓ **In some regions, money from oil helps create better schools, health care, and cultural advancements.**

NEGATIVES

- ✓ **Disputes over national boundaries where oil is discovered has often occurred.**
- ✓ **Discrepancies/disparity in wealth distribution in some oil producing countries has led to a small extremely rich upper class and a large relatively poor lower class.**
- ✓ **Oil production and consumption is harming the environment (e.g., rising global temperatures, hazardous air pollution, and release of harmful greenhouse gasses).**
- ✓ **The depletion of oil resources causes the costs of production to rise (e.g., drilling deeper wells, prospecting in environmentally sensitive areas, and new production techniques.)**
- ✓ **The price of oil fluctuates causing hardships for consumers at the gas pump.**
- ✓ **Damage to the environment and the deaths of workers caused by oil spills such as the BP explosion in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.**
- ✓ **Western influence on local cultures in the Middle East is sometimes considered offensive and is rejected, causing friction such as protests in predominantly Islamic societies.**
- ✓ **Oil gives Middle Eastern nations wealth and a greater influence on world affairs than their populations might suggest.**
- ✓ **The search for fossil fuel energy has led to wars, overthrow of democratically elected leaders, and establishment of puppet governments and dictatorships.**
- ✓ **Some of the oil wealth has been used to finance terrorist activities around the world.**

HANDOUT #1 Introduction

Use this quote from Solar Navigator to engage students in a discussion about the positive and negative effects of oil in the world. Encourage students to keep notes on this paper for later use.

“The world runs on oil. We all rely on a steady supply of it to heat our homes, drive our cars, and keep power flowing through the electric grid. There are, however, several alarming issues related to our dependence on this limited resource.”

http://www.solarnavigator.net/hydrogen_world_navigation.htm

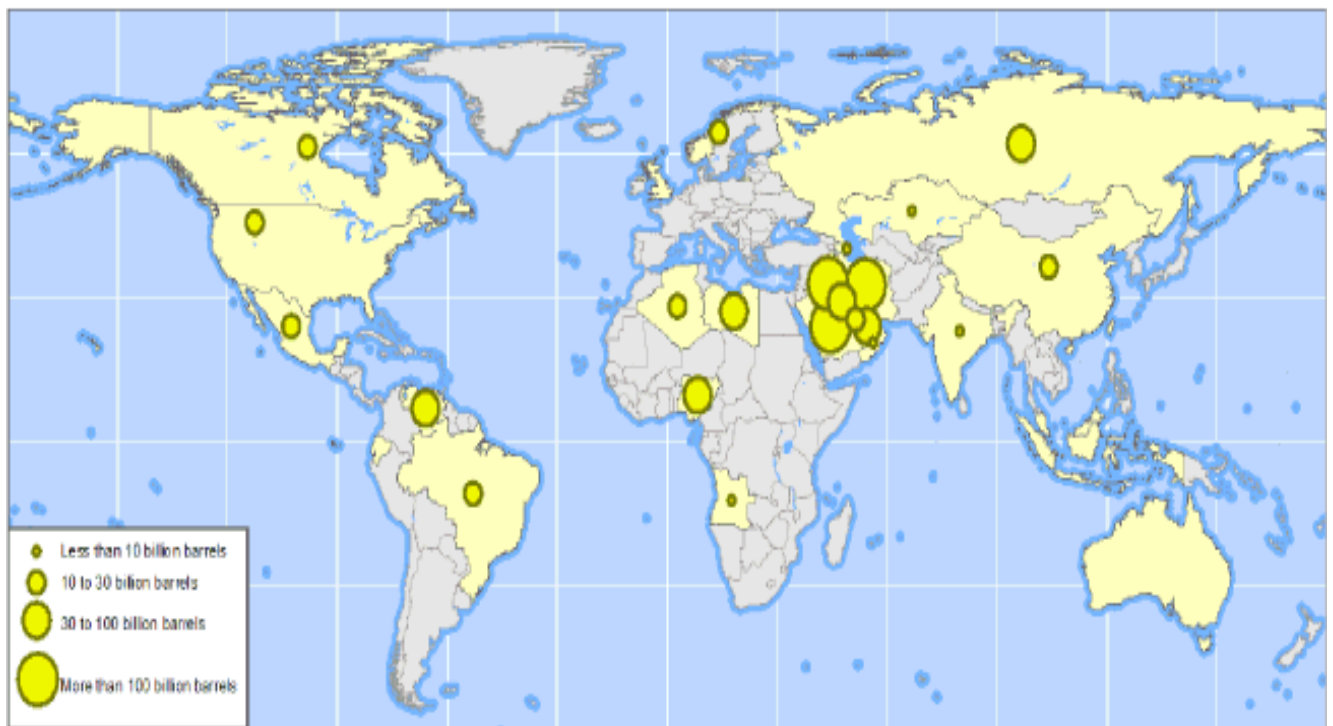
HANDOUT #2

THE WORLD'S OIL RESERVES

2003-2012

Source: US Energy Information Agency, International Energy Annual Report.

The geographical concentration of oil reserves in the Middle East is evident. The countries in the Middle East ordered by population (from largest to smallest) are: Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Cyprus. Some geographers consider Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia in North Africa also a part of the Middle East.



http://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch5en/app15en/img/Map_oilreserves.pdf

HANDOUT #3

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MIDDLE EAST

by

Teresa Begley

I lived and taught social studies in Kuwait from 1993 until 1999. My husband and I arrived one year after Desert Storm to a war-torn area with oil wells burning and destruction at every turn. Our classrooms were placed in whatever buildings we could find that were not completely destroyed. We often had to scavenge for books, blackboards, and desks. When we left before the turn of the millennium, Kuwait was a busy, bustling country in the midst of rebuilding their infrastructure, economy, cultural monuments and residential areas. What I write here is based on my personal observations.

The Middle East has long existed at the crossroads of cultures. It lies at the junction of three continents and from its midst have emerged numerous empires and three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The region's predominant religion is Islam. Many nations, leaders, and events have affected the region throughout history, but the discovery of large oil reserves has most profoundly impacted the culture and people of the Middle Eastern countries.

Following World War I, a number of European nations had control over parts of the Middle East; for example, Kuwait became a colony or province of the British Empire. The region was eventually under the control of the League of Nations, which allowed varying degrees of independence, but these "countries" still wanted to govern themselves. It was not until the 1930s and 1940s, and after World War II, that most of these countries officially gained their independence. Kuwait gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1960.

The discovery of oil and natural gas in the Middle East greatly boosted its economy. Currently this region contains about 65% of the world's proven oil reserves, which has made the countries surrounding the Persian Gulf quite wealthy. Since the world depends on petroleum as its primary source of fuel, especially for transportation, this discovery has obviously created many trading opportunities and has opened the region to varying degrees of Western influence. When my husband and I were arrived there, Kuwait and most of the region were very receptive to the Western influence, but as they began to see how this influence affected their culture, especially some Muslims' views on the place and role of women in their society, attitudes towards Western ways began to change. The outbreak of violence in the Middle East today is a testament to how difficult it is to "transplant" a culture of tolerance and understanding to this area.

Obviously many factors have affected the political, economic, and social aspects of the Middle Eastern culture, but the discovery of oil has probably impacted the region the most. Most of the effects of oil have been positive, especially with the wealth that has been created, but there are also many negatives. I witnessed firsthand the wealth of the Kuwaitis who owned the oil and the poverty of those who came to do the labor. The political, cultural, and environmental impacts must be considered when evaluating the overall effects of the production of abundant petroleum resources in the region.