

Summary: Resources and Religion

The Importance of Oil

In 1908, oil was found in Iran. Later, it was found in other countries in the region. Great Britain, France, and the United States helped these nations develop oil fields. Today, half the world's oil comes from four countries. They are Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, and Iraq. Saudi Arabia is the largest oil-producing country in the world.

Since World War II, these countries' governments have run the oil industries. In 1960, the four oil-producing countries joined together. With Venezuela, they formed OPEC. It stands for Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. OPEC decides how much oil to produce each year. OPEC also sets oil prices. In 1973, OPEC called for an embargo, or a ban. They stopped selling oil to nations that helped Israel. As oil supplies fell, prices rose.

Oil is a primary product, or raw material. It is the region's most important product. Countries in the region export oil and other primary products. Some also export secondary products. These are products made from primary products. One example is petrochemicals, which are made from crude oil and natural gas. They are used to make cosmetics and plastics.

Religion in the Region

Nomads once lived in the deserts. Today, few are left. Governments encourage them to settle in one place.

Islam is the most widespread religion in the region. Islamic culture is a large part of life. People pray five times a day. The Qur'an is read on the radio. The month of Ramadan is important. Muslims fast all day. The fast ends with a huge feast. Many people in the region think the West has too much influence over their culture. Others embrace aspects of Western life, such as its clothing, entertainment, and technology.

Women's roles vary. In Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, women go to school and hold jobs. In Saudi Arabia, religion limits women's roles. Few Saudi women hold jobs. Clothing gives clues about culture. In some countries, people wear western clothing. In more traditional countries, people wear traditional clothing.



Before You Read

Highlight each vocabulary word. Make up a sentence that includes all three words.

primary product *noun*, a raw material

secondary product *noun*, a product made from primary products

petrochemical *noun*, a secondary product made from crude oil and natural gas



After You Read

REVIEW How did OPEC's oil embargo lead to a rise in the price of gasoline?

Draw a box around the sentences that tell about the embargo.

REVIEW What are some effects of westernization of Muslim countries?

Underline the sentences that tell some of the effects.