

Summary: Economies and Cultures

An Agricultural Economy

Many nations of Southeast Asia are developing nations. They are working to improve their economies and help people live safe, healthy, successful lives.

The Green Revolution and irrigation have helped some farmers grow more food. But many small farmers cannot afford to buy fertilizers, chemicals, and modern equipment. These subsistence farmers must rely on good weather and hard work for successful harvests.

In the past 50 years, industry has become important in Southeast Asia. Small factories process crops, make clothing and fabric, and produce small electronic parts. Many people have moved to larger cities to look for work. In the country of Singapore, almost everyone lives in the capital city, which is also called Singapore. The production of electronic goods is its most important industry.

The Cultures of Southeast Asia

The people of Southeast Asia live in widely differing geographic regions. In Indonesia, the Philippines, and Myanmar, water, dense forests, or mountains separate communities. The people speak many languages. In places with large Chinese populations, dialects are spoken.

A form of Buddhism is the most common religion in mainland Southeast Asia. Islam is practiced in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. The Catholic faith is important in southern Vietnam. Protestantism and Hinduism are also practiced in the region.

Statues of the Buddha can be seen in temples all over Southeast Asia. Often, the temples have one or more pagodas. Houses, built of wood or bamboo, have thatch roofs. In areas where there is flooding from monsoons, houses are built on stilts.

Dancing is a popular art form in Southeast Asia. Dancers must train for years. The motions of their hands often tell a story. Weavers in Southeast Asia use their country's available resources. In the Philippines, fabrics are sometimes made of pineapple fiber. In Indonesia, weavers make cotton batik. In Laos, they weave cotton and silk from fibers grown there.



Before You Read

Find and draw a box around each vocabulary word.

developing nation *noun*, a nation working to improve its economy

pagoda *noun*, a tower built in many levels, with sculptures or carvings of Buddha on each level

thatch *noun*, woven palm fronds used to build roofs

batik *noun*, cotton fabric with intricate patterns made by using wax and dye



After You Read

REVIEW How can geography affect the languages of a nation?

Underline the sentences that help tell how geography can affect the language of a nation.