

Unit 2: Geography & Resources
7th Grade Social Studies
19 Class Meetings

Revised January 2026

Essential Questions

- How does the geography of where we live define our lives?
- How can natural resources that benefit one group of people hurt another group?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: The success of human civilization is causally related to access to water, both promoting life in ancient history and causing conflict in modern history.

- Describe the geography of the Middle East in terms of landforms, bodies of water, climate, and political boundaries and compare it to local geography
- Describe the elements of early human civilization in the Fertile Crescent and its relationship with water

EU 2: Water scarcity in the Middle East and North Africa has contributed to increasing tensions between countries and may lead to regional conflict.

- Evaluate the connection between geography, major economic activity, and water scarcity
- Compare and contrast daily life in water-poor locations to student life to explain the relationship between water scarcity and conflict

EU 3: Oil reserves in the Middle East have contributed to both increased wealth and political power, as well as heightened income inequity and international military conflict.

- Evaluate the positive and negative impacts of oil in OPEC nations
- Critique the role oil plays in international cooperation and warfare

Standards

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

- **7.Inq.2.a.** Apply disciplinary knowledge and practices to demonstrate an understanding of world regional studies content.
- **7.Inq.3.a.** Gather relevant evidence from multiple sources using both print and digital resources and databases (e.g., origin, authority, structure, context, credibility).⁴⁴
- **7.Inq.3.b.** Organize and prioritize relevant evidence from multiple sources to support claims.
- **7.Inq.4.a.** Construct arguments using evidence from multiple sources.
- **7.Inq.4.b.** Construct explanations using summary, sequence, examples, and data.
- **7.Inq.4.d.** Present arguments and explanations about local, regional, and global issues to reach a target audience using print, oral, and digital technologies.
- **7.Inq.4.e.** Analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

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- **7.Inq.4.f.** Assess individual and collective capacities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.
- **7.Geo.8.a.** Analyze how human-environment interactions influence movement and settlement (e.g., Floating City Of Ganvie, The Dry Corridor, Tenochtitlán, Silk Road, trans-Saharan caravans).
- **7.Geo.9.a.** Evaluate the influences of long-term human-induced environmental change on spatial patterns of conflict and cooperation within a region (e.g., State Barrier Fence of Western Australia, uncontacted Indigenous tribes, Third Agricultural Revolution).
- **7.Geo.10.b.** Analyze how environmental characteristics vary among regions (e.g., climate, natural disasters, waterways, mountain ranges, deserts).
- **7.Civ.12.a.** Evaluate the effectiveness of rules, laws, and agreements as a means of addressing regional and global problems (e.g., International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court, Paris Agreement, International Atomic Energy Agency).
- **7.Eco.6.a.** Explain how changes in supply and demand have influenced the price and quantity of a good or service in a region (e.g., gold inflation related to Mansa Musa’s Hajj, Dutch fur trade in North America, Rainforest logging, Cobalt mining in Democratic Republic of the Congo, global agriculture, Venezuela oil production, illegal poaching).

Common Core State Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1:** Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.5** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9:** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7:** Integrate visual information (e.g., charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8:** Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

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ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

- **Water Shapes Human Civilizations**
 - Describe the factors allowing civilization to spring up around the Tigris and Euphrates, Huang He, Harappa, and the Nile
 - Investigate the elements of culture found in all civilizations
 - Compare and contrast the culture of early human civilizations to the cultures of individual students and the student community

- **Modern Water Conflicts**
 - Analyze maps of water-scarce and water-rich areas to make the connection between geography and access to water
 - Complete a close reading of the role of water scarcity in modern human conflict
 - Compare and contrast natives of daily life in water-scarce and water-rich to infer the role of water scarcity in a region's quality of life
 - Evaluate different regional maps to make conclusions about on-going conflicts over water and predict future outbreaks of violence

- **Oil, Wealth, and War**
 - Describe the history and importance of OPEC to oil-producing countries in the Middle East
 - Evaluate oil's impact on a nation's GDP and wealth distribution
 - Investigate the impact of oil in international relations
 - Argue whether oil or water contributes to a higher quality of life

Vocabulary:

- Civilization, Agriculture, Nomad, Hunter-Gatherers, Division of Labor, Surplus, Scarcity, Culture, Religion, Government, Economics, Literature, Customs and Traditions, Festivals, Water Scarcity, Economic Scarcity, Physical Scarcity, Quality of Life, Drought, Agriculture, OPEC, Crude Oil, GDP, Wealth Distribution, International Relations, International Conflict, Persuasive, Argumentative, Thesis, Hook

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Language Arts – reading informational texts and writing persuasive, argumentative responses

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Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Construct a graphic organizer to visually display key elements of culture
 - *What do you think about when you think about your “culture”?*
- Investigate the culture and geography of the Middle East
 - *Imagine you’re meeting someone from the Middle East for the first time. What questions would you ask to learn more about their culture and geography?*
- Apply close reading strategies to analyze the role of water in the birth of human civilization
 - *Which human invention do you think is the most important? Why?*
- Draw inferences about early civilizations and their relationship with water by analyzing technology, laws, literature, and art.
 - *The earliest civilizations existed 5,000 years ago. Do you think you’d have anything in common with them? Why or why not?*
- Generate predictions about life in water-scarce regions based on a map analysis
 - *What would happen if there wasn’t enough water in the US for one day? A month? A year?*
- Apply close reading strategies to analyze the role of water in international conflict
 - *What are “notes,” and how do you take them?*
- Compare and contrast narratives of daily life of people in water-scarce and water-rich areas to infer the impact of water scarcity on quality of life
 - *How might your life be different if you were born in a region with water scarcity?*
- Predict future regional conflicts by analyzing maps of water scarce regions
 - *What are some of the features of the geography of a water-scarce country? What are the features of a water-rich country?*
- Plan, write, and revise an informative essay about the role of water in shaping human life past and present
 - *What are some of the ways water changed the course of human history AND changes life for humans today?*
- Analyze the impact of oil reserves on people of the Middle East through a simulation
 - *How would the world be different if we no longer had gasoline for our cars?*
- Evaluate and investigate the worth of natural oil reserves and income inequality in OPEC
 - *List 5 natural resources you think can make a country rich*
- Investigate the causes and effect of Operation Desert Storm**
 - *What are some reasons countries go to war?*
 - *Is there ever a good justification for one country to go to war with another? Why do you say that?*
- Demonstrate an understanding of Unit 2 concepts of a summative test and essay
- Evaluate the role of the United Nations in mediating international conflict
 - *What would it take to prevent war between countries over water or oil? Why?*
- Create and deliver a proposal a water-scarce or oil-rich country could present to the UN to help prevent international conflict***
 - *What would a water-scarce country need in order to prevent war? What about an oil-*

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rich country?

- *What are some common editing mistakes we make when we write?*
- *Today we're going to vote on our proposals. What are some tips you would give your fellow classmates on how to be successful during an accountable talk discussion?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Guided notes
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Student choice
- Written feedback
- Cornell notes
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Anchor charts
- Small group instruction
- Conferencing
- Text and video chunking with guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

Differentiated Instruction for English Learners

- Word walls with visuals
- TWPS (think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

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Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Student discussions and responses
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Map work
- Informative Essay: How has water changed the course of human life? (EU 1 and EU 2)
 - Teacher Scoring Guide
- Argumentative Essay: Which is more valuable, oil or water? (EU 2 and EU 3)
 - Teacher Scoring Guide

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz #1: Water & Mesopotamian Culture (EU 1)
- Quiz #2: Modern Water Conflict (EU 2)
- Summative Unit 2 Test (EU 1, EU 2, and EU 3)
- Informative Essay: How has water changed the course of human life? (EU 1 and EU 2)
- Argumentative Essay: Which is more valuable, oil or water? (EU 2 and EU 3)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: “Middle East Essay”

Description: Students will conduct research about the geography of the Middle East, in particular the availability of oil and water. As delegates representing their country, students will write a one-page proposal outlining one small change people around the world can make to help prevent or end conflict over oil or water. The proposal must address the cause of the problem, the effects of the problem, and a solution. Students must mention both the role of water (EU 1 and EU 2) and oil (EU 3) in either contributing to or improving the problem.

Students will then use their proposal to participate in an accountable talk discussion to persuade other nations to help their cause. Students must anticipate rebuttals and use accountable talk skills, including questioning, during their presentations.

Evaluation: Teacher Scoring Guide

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Unit Resources

- Teacher-created interactive Google maps, adapted Epic of Gilgamesh, adapted Hammurabi's Code, abridged timeline of Israeli-Palestinian conflict with causes, narratives of middle school students
- Videos on Mesopotamia:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVf5kZA0HtQ&list=PLHu2czQRGxxcrzy2XWWxRenDfpE TV-LTF&index=30&ab_channel=NationalGeographic;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBk9KywTIgk>
- NewsEla
- The Royal Game of Ur (online): <http://www.playonlinedicgames.com/royal-game-of-ur>
- History.com: <https://www.history.com/news/sumerians-inventions-mesopotamia>
- The British Museum: <http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/>
- Frontline's Oral History of the Gulf War: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/>
- PBS'S Global Connections Middle East:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/index.html>
- National Archives document analysis: <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets>
- Newsela: <https://newsela.com/read/lib-life-sumer-mesopotamia/id/32778/>, <https://newsela.com/read/lib-overview-mesopotamia-culture/id/32870/>
- NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/09/795002059/how-much-the-u-s-relies-on-oil-from-the-middle-east>
- The Arab Weekly: <https://the arabweekly.com/middle-east-leads-world-income-inequality>
- Imageryforcitizens.com: <http://www.cotf.edu/earthinfo/meast/MEeco.html>
- Georgia DOE: <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Georgia-Standards/Documents/Social-Studies-7th-Grade-Unit-3-Sample-Unit.pdf>
- Laptops or notebooks to capture notes
- Graphic organizers
- Worksheets
- Readings