

North Africa and Southwest Asia: Place and Times

- SECTION 1** Physical Geography
- SECTION 2** Ancient Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent
- SECTION 3** Ancient Egypt
- SECTION 4** Birthplace of Three Religions
- SECTION 5** Muslim Empires



Region The Sahara stretches across much of North Africa.



FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHY

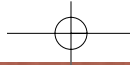
How have sheep contributed to the spread of deserts in North Africa?

Human-Environment Interaction • Overgrazing, or allowing livestock such as sheep and goats to eat too much vegetation, has contributed to the spread of deserts in North Africa. Desertification from overgrazing is particularly bad in northwestern countries such as Morocco.

As population increases, more strain is put on fragile areas. When people plant too many crops, graze too many animals, or cut down trees in the dry lands—especially during periods of drought—the land becomes unusable. People have difficulty growing food, and famine may follow. Countries in North Africa are working to change political, economic, and social problems that contribute to desertification.

What do you think?

- ♦ What might cause people to plant or graze their animals on dry lands?
- ♦ What can countries do to prevent desertification?



READING SOCIAL STUDIES

BEFORE YOU READ

►► What Do You Know?

Before you read the chapter, consider what you already know about North Africa and Southwest Asia. Look at a physical map of the region, and think about features, such as the Sahara. How might living in a desert affect the lives of people who live there? What do you know about the pyramids of ancient Egypt? Are you familiar with any of these sacred books—the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian Bible, or the Qur'an of Islam? Many of the events in these books took place in this region. Try to imagine the changes that have occurred here in 5,000 years of human history.

►► What Do You Want to Know?

Decide what you know about the physical features of the region and about ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Muslim Empires. In your notebook, record what you hope to learn from this chapter.



Place • Ziggurats were stepped towers on which temples were built in ancient Mesopotamia. ▲

READ AND TAKE NOTES

Reading Strategy: Making Generalizations Making generalizations is a useful strategy for understanding universal themes in social studies. A generalization is a statement expressed in general terms but supported by detailed evidence. As you read this chapter, think about how the civilizations that arose in North Africa and Southwest Asia influenced world history. Use the chart below to record details that support each generalization.

- Copy the chart into your notebook.
- As you read, notice how civilization has developed in this region.
- Beside each generalization, record some key details that support it.



Culture • The Qur'an is the sacred book of Islam. ▲

Generalizations	Supporting Details
1. Bodies of water provide resources for people in North Africa and Southwest Asia.	
2. Complex civilizations developed religions and laws in ancient Mesopotamia.	
3. An ancient Egyptian culture based on shared beliefs and goals left a monumental legacy.	
4. Three of the world's major religions began in Southwest Asia.	
5. Islamic beliefs and achievements spread throughout the world.	