Objective:

Where is the Middle East? How did geography affect the development of post-classical civilizations in the Middle East?

- **Describe** the location and geography of the Middle East.
- **Explain** how geography affected the development of post-classical civilizations in the Middle East.

Introduction

➡ Directions: In the chart below, write down everything you think you know about the Middle East right now and questions about the Middle East that you would like to know the answers to.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>the Middle East</th>
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<tr>
<th>What do you already know about the Middle East?</th>
<th>What do you want to know about the Middle East?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write questions you would like to know the answers to.</td>
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UNIT 4 | Political Powers and Achievements | SQ 10. Where is the Middle East? How did geography affect the development of post-classical civilizations in the Middle East?
What is the Middle East?

The **Middle East** is a region of the world that includes parts of southwestern Asia and Egypt, in North Africa.

This is generally a hot and arid (desert-like) climate, but there are fertile river valleys like those of the **Nile** in Egypt and the **Tigris** and **Euphrates Rivers** in modern-day Iraq.

Throughout history, the Middle East has played an important role. It was the home of two ancient civilizations, **Ancient Egypt** and **Mesopotamia**, and three of the world’s largest religions: **Judaism**, **Christianity**, and **Islam**. In addition, the region’s location between Europe, Africa, and Asia made it a center of **trade** and **cultural diffusion**.

This area was once known as the “Near East” but is most often referred to as the “Middle East.” Both names demonstrate the power that European countries have had in writing world history since “the east” is a term that assumes the “center” of the world is Western Europe.

Today, the Middle East includes the countries Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Cyprus, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Though there are many different religions practiced in the region, most of the people who live in the Middle East are **Muslim**, meaning that they practice the religion called **Islam**, which was founded during the post-classical era.

Questions

1. **What is the climate like in the Middle East?**

2. **Why is the Middle East historically significant?**

3. **What religion do most people practice in the Middle East?**
What geographic features exist in the Middle East? How might those features have affected the development of post-classical civilizations in the Middle East?

Directions: Examine the map below, then read the descriptions of the corresponding geographic features and answer the accompanying questions.

Source: Arabian_Desert.jpg created by NASA is in the public domain and modified by Pfly and by New Visions for Public Schools.
A. Arabian Desert on the Arabian Peninsula

The largest land mass in the Middle East is the Arabian Peninsula and most of the Arabian Peninsula is covered by the Arabian Desert. The Arabian desert is the fourth largest desert in the world. Though it is a harsh climate, Arab traders traveled across the desert on camels to cities that formed near oases like Mecca and Medina. An oasis is a source of water in a desert.

1. What effect might this geographic feature have had on trade within the Middle East?

B. Nile River Valley

The Nile River, which runs from south to north through modern-day Sudan and Egypt, is one of the longest rivers in the world. The fertile land on its banks gave birth to Ancient Egypt and was a center of trade and learning throughout the ancient, classical, and postclassical periods. During the classical era, the Greeks conquered Egypt and then the Romans did the same. The Nile River Valley was also an important economic and cultural region during the postclassical era. In addition, the Nile River served as a valuable route for traveling and transportation into the African continent.

2. Why might a post classical civilization want to conquer Egypt and the Nile River Valley?