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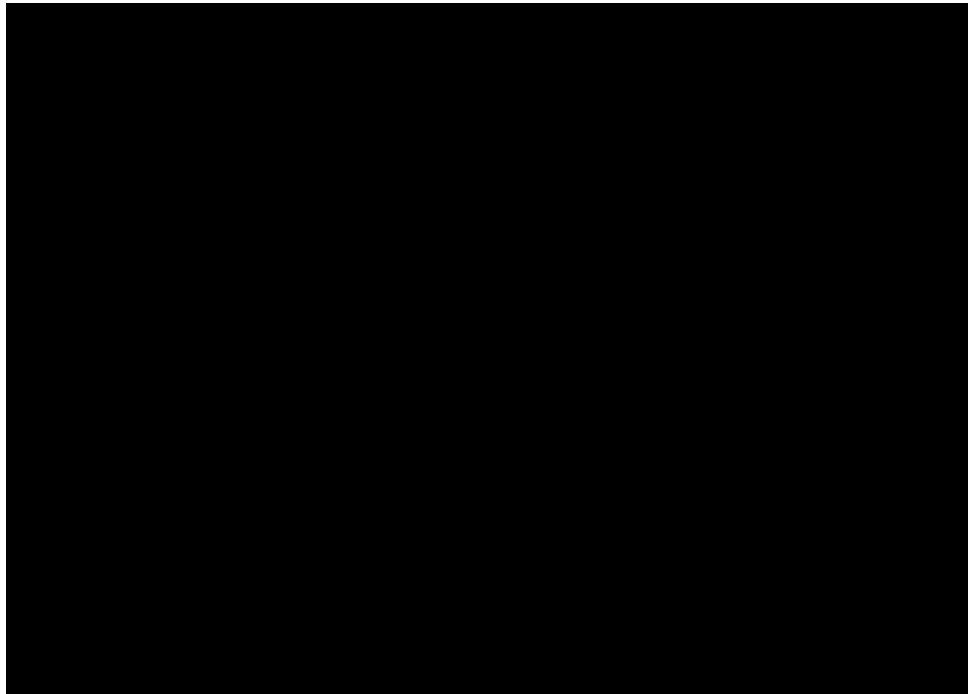
## The Middle East and Oil

The Middle East is an important part of the world. It is important because it is close to Africa, Asia and Europe. It is also important because it has oil. Many industrial nations buy oil from the Middle East. Because industrial nations depend on oil, their economies are interdependent with the Middle East oil-producing countries. Oil gives oil-producing nations a lot of power. There have been many wars in this important part of the world. Events in the Middle East threaten peace in the world. This map shows the countries of the Middle East.

Some people worry that trouble in the Middle East could lead to a third world war. Why? One reason is oil. Oil is very important to many countries. More than half of the world's oil supply comes from the Middle East. If the oil supply is cut off, there would be serious problems all over the world. Without oil, many countries, like Japan, would have serious economic problems.

In 1960, oil-producing countries in the world got together. They made a group called OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). They formed a world monopoly. They control the supply and price of oil. They have become very rich. The OPEC nations use some of their money for education, housing, and medicine. They also use some of their money for guns, war planes and tanks. The control of prices and production has decreased because of disunity and other factors.

Middle East oil is one reason for the Cold War too. The U.S. and the Soviet Union both oil-producing friends in the Middle East. Also, Arab nations asked the Soviet Union for help to fight Israel, a friend of the United States.



besides oil, the Middle East is a crossroads for land, sea, and air travel between Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Religion also increases the importance of this area. Christians, Jews, and Muslims view the Middle East as a "holy land."

**Questions:** Answer the following questions based on the reading The Middle East & Oil.

1. Why is the Middle East oil crucial to the economies of industrialized countries?

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2. Why have the United States and the Soviet Union been on opposite sides in Middle East problems?

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3. What major religions view the Middle East as a "holy land?"

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4. What is the geographic importance of the Middle East?

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5. Why is the Middle East an important area of the world? (be specific with your reasons)

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## **I. Middle Eastern Geography**

### **A. Location and its Effects**

1. Situated between the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, much of the world's trade passed through the region resulting in a unique mixture of cultures.
2. One of the earliest civilizations began in the Fertile Crescent (modern Iraq).
3. The Suez Canal in Egypt is an important trade route for European and Asian trade.

### **B. Religious Importance**

1. The three main monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) began in the Middle East. The result has been centuries of warfare between these religions for control of Jerusalem.
2. When religious warfare broke out in Lebanon between Muslims and Christians, 241 U.S. Marines were killed as they tried to make peace.

### **C. Economic Importance**

1. Most of the world's oil comes from the Middle East.
2. Competition for control of the oil supply has led to frequent conflict, including the recent Gulf War. The United Nation sent troops to stop the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.