

Critical Thinking about **GEOGRAPHY**

The Middle East

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ISBN 978-0-8251-6596-2

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J. Weston Walch, Publisher

40 Walch Drive • Portland, ME 04103

www.walch.com

Printed in the United States of America

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LESSON

1

Reading a Political Map

✦ **Goal:** To develop concepts and skills related to reading and understanding a political map

National Geography Standards

Standard 1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Preparing Students for Instruction

Before starting this activity, review the following with students:

- ✦ Make sure students understand how to read a map legend.
- ✦ Review measuring distance using a map scale.
- ✦ Review the names and locations of continents on our planet.

Map Overview

This map shows the location of the group of countries generally referred to as the Middle East. These countries are at the point where three continents meet—Asia, Africa, and Europe. Technically, the Middle East is in Asia, but some countries straddle the continental boundaries.

Answer Key

1. Any four of the following: Turkey, Syria, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait
2. Africa, Europe, and Asia
3. Any four of the following: Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Arabian Sea, Aral Sea, Red Sea, and Sea of Azov
4. Turkey
5. Answers will vary. Based on the water that surrounds much of the land, students may infer that shipping and fishing would be common industries. Be sure that student responses are justified by information shown on the map, and not on other information they may bring to this question. For example, students may be aware of oil reserves in the area. The map, however, does not show this information.
6. Answers will vary. Students may postulate that differences in language, customs, type of government, or religion may have caused the establishment of these countries.

Discussion Guide

To support students in reflecting on the activities and to gather some formative information about student learning, use the following prompts to facilitate a class discussion to “debrief” the map activities.

Prompts/Questions

1. Which countries on the map have you heard of? What do you know about them?
2. How might the existence of seas encourage settlement in the Middle East?

Suggested Appropriate Responses

1. Answers will vary but may include Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and Iran.
2. Answers will vary. Students may postulate that the first settlers in this area may have arrived by ship. The opportunity to use the oceans and seas as highways to export and import goods may also have encouraged settlement.

Extending and Enhancing Learning

- ✦ Assign students to work individually or in pairs to investigate different countries in the Middle East. Have them find out about language, dress, customs, food, religion, interesting historical events, housing, architecture, and so on. After students have completed the research, have each individual or pair introduce the country to the class. Display a large map of the Middle East so student presenters can point to the country they are “introducing.”
- ✦ For students who need more support, have them play a “Who Am I?” game to locate Middle East countries on the map. Draw up a set of clues such as “I am a country south of the United Arab Emirates. My coastline borders the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Who am I?” Students will then locate Yemen on the map. They may write down the country names after finding them, or they may identify them to a partner. Have partners make up the questions themselves.
- ✦ To challenge students further, have them find out about the many bodies of water in this area and how they are used by these countries. How crucial to sea traffic is the Suez Canal, for example, or what historic biblical story involved the Red Sea?

LESSON

1

Reading a Political Map

Geography Vocabulary

equator: a line of latitude that circles the earth and divides it evenly in half

political map: a map showing countries in a region, or a single country's territories, states or provinces, boundaries, and capitals

Tropic of Cancer: a line of latitude about 23 degrees north of the equator

 **Reading the Map**

Many countries make up the region called the Middle East. Some of them are very small. Others, such as Iran, are large. Study the map. Think about what might have caused people in this area to form small nations. Did they begin as larger entities and then divide into smaller groups? Have they always been the same countries that they are now?

 **Understanding the Map**

1. Name four countries that have a boundary with Iraq.
2. The Middle East is located at a point at which three continents come together. Name those continents.
3. Name at least four bodies of water shown on the map with "Sea" as part of their names.
4. What country is just north of Syria?

 **Analyzing the Map**

5. Looking at the map, what industries would you expect to find in the Middle East? Explain.
6. Some countries in the Middle East are very small. Why do you think that is? Explain.

Name: _____

Political Map of the Middle East



LESSON**2****Using the Compass Rose
to Read a Site Map**

✦ **Goal:** To develop concepts and skills related to reading a site map of a relatively small area using the map's legend and compass rose

National Geography Standards

Standard 1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Preparing Students for Instruction

Before starting this activity, review the skills of using a legend and a compass rose.

Map Overview

Over 90 percent of the population of the Middle East are Muslim people who subscribe to the religion of Islam. A building used for public worship by Muslims is called a mosque. This diagram shows the interior of a mosque. Point out the special areas inside the mosque to students as they examine the map. Explain that Muslims face Mecca, their holy city, when they pray. The founder of their religion, Mohammed, was born there.

Answer Key

- | |
|---|
| 1. Upper right |
| 2. Southeast |
| 3. About 77 yards |
| 4. About 215 yards |
| 5. The prayer hall |
| 6. The audience will already be facing the prayer leader, because the mihrab directs them to face in its direction. |

Discussion Guide

To support students in reflecting on the activities and to gather some formative information about student learning, use the following prompts to facilitate a class discussion to “debrief” the map activities.

Prompts/Questions

1. How would this map help someone who had never been to the mosque and wanted to worship there?
2. There are other areas in the mosque besides the prayer hall. How do you suppose the forecourt and the main court are used?

Suggested Appropriate Responses

1. The map would help a worshipper find the prayer hall, and show the worshipper which direction to face when praying.
2. Answers will vary. Students may suggest that they serve as quiet walking areas for meditation. The main court might be used for gatherings other than prayer.

Extending and Enhancing Learning

- ✦ Have students work in pairs or small groups to make a site map of a local gathering place such as their school, their neighborhood, a mall, or a supermarket. Have them include a compass rose and an (estimated) map scale, and create a legend that includes symbols for important items on the map. Completed maps can be displayed in class.
- ✦ For students who need more support, have them work more with the map scale and the compass rose. Using the map scale, they can measure distances on the mosque map. Using the compass rose, they can decide which way they would be facing in different parts of the mosque.
- ✦ To challenge students further, have them research the city of Mecca and its history, then write a report that includes a map of the city and an explanation of the reason why Muslims make pilgrimages to this city.

LESSON

2

**Using the Compass Rose
to Read a Site Map****Geography Vocabulary**

compass rose: an element of a map used to show direction

site map: a detailed map of a relatively small area

 **Reading the Map**

This map shows the interior of a building used for public worship by Muslims. It is called a mosque. Most mosques share certain features. One is the minaret. This is a tower from which a call to prayer is issued four times a day by a man called a “muezzin.” Find the minaret on this map. Next, find the minbar and mihrab. Read what functions they have in the mosque.

 **Understanding the Map**

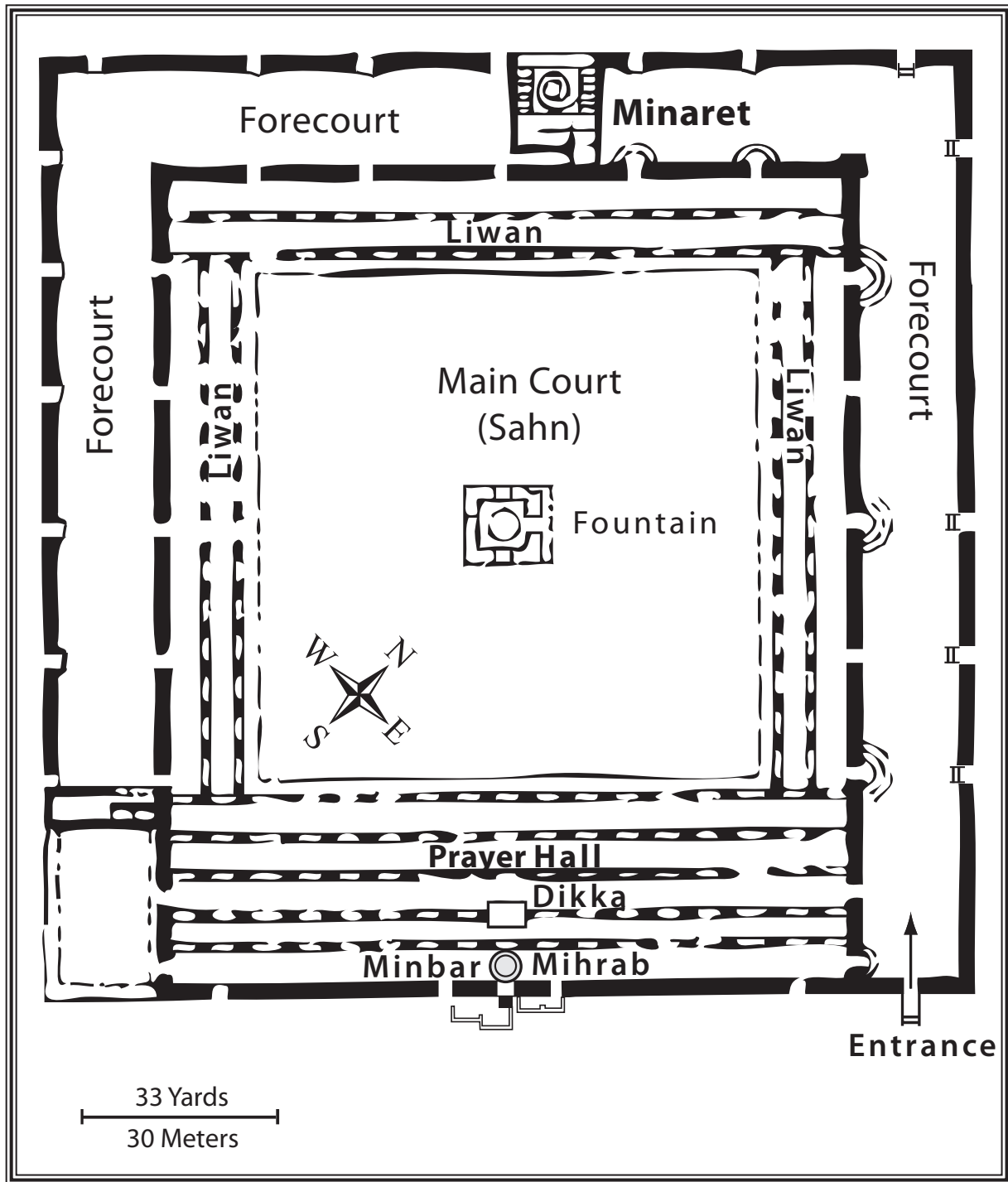
1. Look at the compass rose. Normally the compass rose on a map is oriented with north at the top of the map. If you entered this mosque and faced north, which part of the map would you be facing: the top, upper left, upper right, side, lower left, or lower right?
2. Find the mihrab on this map. When Muslims pray, they always face their holy city, Mecca. Mecca is where Mohammed, the founder of this religion, was born. The mihrab is a place in the mosque that directs worshippers toward Mecca. In which compass direction would you be facing if you were looking at the mihrab in this mosque? Use the compass rose to help you.
3. Use the map scale. Measure the width of the main court in yards. Give a close approximation.
4. Imagine this: You walk in the entrance of the mosque. You walk down the forecourt to its end. Turn left. Walk to the minaret. About how many yards have you walked?

 **Analyzing the Map**

5. In which area of the map do most people probably gather when the call to prayer sounds from the minaret?
6. Why do you think the minbar is usually located next to the mihrab? Explain.

Name: _____

Map of Ibn Tulun Mosque



The mihrab is a niche in a wall of a mosque that is closest to Mecca. It shows the direction people should face when praying. Muslims pray facing Mecca. The minbar is usually to the right of the mihrab when a person is facing it. The minbar is a pulpit from which a sermon would be delivered. It looks like a domed box with a door at the top of a staircase.