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| **LESSON 1****The Physical Geography of North Africa****ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How do people adapt to their environment?** |
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| *The Sahara, in North Africa, is the world’s largest hot desert. The* *desert extends over almost the entire northern one-third of the* *continent of Africa.***Landforms and Waterways*****How have physical features shaped life in the region?***Hassan is an Egyptian farmer. In winter, when temperatures are milder than during the summer, he grows wheat. Rainfall is scarce in Egypt, however. How does Hassan get the water he needs to grow his wheat? He draws it from a canal. Canals carry water from the Nile River to the country’s farms around the river. Just as they did thousands of years ago, Egypt’s farmers still depend on the waters of the Nile.**Countries of the Region**Egypt is the easternmost country in North Africa. The Sinai Peninsula, a triangle of land across the Red Sea from Africa, belongs to Egypt but it is considered a part of Southwest Asia.North Africa includes five countries. All, like Egypt, sit on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Libya is to Egypt’s west. Tunisia and Algeria are west of that country. Farthest west is Morocco, which has a small Mediterranean coast and a longer coast along the Atlantic Ocean. South of Morocco lies an area called Western Sahara. Morocco claims this area, although the United Nations does not recognize its ownership of this land. |  |

North Africa is a large region. If you placed North Africa over the 48 connected states of the United States, it would reach from Maine to Washington state and cover the northern half of the country.

**Coastal Plains and Mountains**

In North Africa, low, narrow plains sit on the **margins**, or edges, of the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. In the west, the high Atlas Mountains rise just behind this coastal plain. These mountains extend about 1,200 miles (1,931 km) across Morocco and Algeria into Tunisia. They form the longest mountain chain in Africa and greatly influence the region’s climate.

The Atlas Mountains are actually two sets of mountains that run alongside each other. A high plateau sits between them. The southern chain is generally higher than the one to the north. It includes Mount Toubkal in Morocco. At 13,665 feet (4,165 m), it is the highest peak in North Africa.

South of these mountains is a low plateau that reaches across most of North Africa. The land rises higher in a few spots formed by isolated mountains. In Egypt, the southern reaches of the Nile River cut through a highland area to form a deep gorge, or valley. Southeastern Egypt has low mountains on the shores of the Red Sea. The southern part of Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula is also mountainous. This area includes Egypt’s highest point, Gebel Katherina. It reaches 8,652 feet (2,637 m) high. Another set of low mountains lies in northeastern Libya, near the coast.

**Lowlands**

Northwestern Egypt has a large area of lowland. Called the Qattara Depression, it sinks 440 feet (134 m) below sea level. This area is nearly the size of New Jersey. Marshes and lakes prevent cars and trucks from passing through it.

**Waterways**

For centuries, North Africa has been linked by the Mediterranean Sea to other lands. The sea has brought trade, new ideas, and conquering armies.

Next to the Mediterranean, the most important body of water in the region is the Nile River. At 4,160 miles (6,695 km), the mighty Nile is the longest river in the world. It begins far south of Egypt at Lake Victoria in East Africa. That lake sits on the border of Uganda and Tanzania. The river flows northward, joined by several tributaries. The most important of them is the Blue Nile, which begins in the highlands of Ethiopia.

The Nile has a massive delta at its mouth. A **delta** is an area formed by soil deposits that build up as river water slows down. Many deltas form where a river enters a larger body of water. The Nile delta is found where the Nile meets the Mediterranean Sea. Here, at the mouth of the river, the Nile’s delta covers more than 9,500 square miles (24,605 sq. km)—larger than the size of New Hampshire. The river once took seven different **channels**, or courses, to reach the sea. Today, only two remain. The others have been filled with soil.

The Nile brings life to dry Egypt. In ancient times, filled by rains to the south, the Nile flooded each year. These floods left **silt**—a fine, rich soil that is excellent for farming—along the banks of the river and in the delta. Farmers used the soil to grow crops. Because they could grow large amounts of food, they were able to support the growth of a great civilization. Ancient Egypt was called “the gift of the Nile.”

Today, several dams control the floods. The largest is Aswān High Dam. These dams hold back the high volume of water produced in the rainy season. The water can then be released during the year. An important benefit is that Egypt’s farmers today can grow crops year-round. This is the water the farmer Hassan uses to grow his wheat. Another benefit of the dams is that people in Egypt have security from floods. One negative consequence of the dams is that the silt no longer settles on the land and enriches the soil.

Egypt controls another important waterway. This one, the Suez Canal, is human-made. The canal connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. As a result, it links Europe and North Africa to the Indian and Pacific oceans. International trade depends on this canal. Using it enables ships traveling between Asia and Europe to avoid going all the way around Africa. The Suez Canal saves many days of travel time and much costly fuel.

***Citing Text Evidence*** Why was ancient Egypt called “the gift of the Nile”?

**Climate**

***How do people survive in a dry climate?***

What would it be like if it hardly ever rained? That is the situation that many North Africans face. Large areas of the region receive only a few inches of rainfall each year—if that much.

**Causes of North Africa’s Climates**

The Atlas Mountains play a major role in controlling the climate in the western part of North Africa. These mountains create the rain shadow effect. Moist air blows southward from the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea toward the mountains. As the air rises up the northern slopes, it cools and releases rain. By the time it passes over the mountains, the air is dry. This dry air reaches the interior. Inland areas, then, remain arid.

The vast inland area of North Africa is dry for another reason. High-pressure air systems descend over areas to the south of the region for much of the year. They send hot, dry air blowing to the north. This air mass dries out the land. On the rare occasions when it does rain in the desert, the southern winds soon follow. They dry the land and leave behind **wadis**, or dry streambeds.

**Desert and Semiarid Areas**

Much of North Africa, then, is covered by a desert: the Sahara. Imagine a vast expanse of space, like an ocean, but covered in sand and rock. That is what the Sahara looks like. Spreading across more than 3.5 million square miles (9.1 million sq. km), the Sahara is as large as the entire United States. It covers most of North Africa and spills into three other regions of Africa, as well.

The Sahara’s vast stretches of sand are called **ergs**. Strong winds blow the sand about, creating huge dust storms that choke people and animals that are caught outside. The winds also build towering sand dunes. When new winds blow, they can change the shape and size of those dunes.

Ergs cover only about a quarter of the Sahara. In other areas, rocky plateaus called *hamadas* and rocks eroded by wind are common. Some areas contain oases, areas fed by underground sources of water. Plants can grow in oases and trade caravans that cross the desert stop at them for needed water. **Nomads**, people who move about from place to place in search of food, rely on these oases during their travels. They use the plants to graze herds of sheep or other animals. Some people live on oases and grow crops.

In the North African part of the Sahara, temperatures soar during the day in the summer. They can reach as high as 136°F (58°C). During the winter, though, daytime temperatures can drop as low as 55°F (13°C).

**Mediterranean and Other Climates**

North of the desert are different climate zones. A band of steppes encircle the desert immediately to the north. Temperatures here are high, and rainfall is slightly greater than in the desert. This band extends to the eastern coast. Coastal cities in Libya receive only 10 inches to 15 inches (25 cm to 38 cm) of rain per year. Alexandria, near Egypt’s coast, generally receives only 7 inches (18 cm) of rainfall per year.

A Mediterranean climate dominates the western coast. This climate gives the region warm, dry summers and mild, rainy winters. More rain falls along the coast than in the dry interior. Rain amounts are higher in the west than in the east. In the west, they are higher on the mountain slopes than along the coast. Coastal areas of Morocco receive 32 inches (81 cm) or less of rain per year.

Mountain areas with highland climates also receive more rainfall—as much as 80 inches (203 cm) per year. Highland climates are found within the mountains. Morocco’s Atlas Mountains often are covered by snow in the winter. As hard as it might be to believe, just a few hundred miles north of the Sahara, people can snow ski.

***Analyzing*** Where do you think most people in North Africa live? Explain why this might be so.

**Resources**

***What resources does North Africa have?***

Oil and natural gas are resources that we use to power our cars and trucks and to generate electricity and heat. Some countries of North Africa have these resources in large quantities. All five countries in the region, though, struggle to get enough of another precious resource—water.

**Oil, Gas, and Other Resources**

Libya is the most oil-rich country in North Africa. Its oil reserves are ranked ninth in the world and it exports more oil than all but 15 other countries. Libya also has natural gas, but in lesser amounts. The money Libya earns from oil has fueled its economy.

Algeria has large reserves of natural gas—more than all but nine other countries. It also has large supplies of oil. These two resources make up nearly all of its exports.

Like Algeria, Egypt has larger reserves of natural gas than oil. Still, it has enough oil to supply most of what it consumes each year. Egypt even sells a small amount to other countries.

Tunisia’s main resources are iron ore and phosphates. **Phosphates** are chemical compounds that are often used in fertilizers. These products are important in Morocco, as well. In addition, rich fishing grounds off Morocco’s coast are a vital resource. Fish is one of that country’s leading exports.

**Water**

Limited rainfall and high temperatures in this region leave little freshwater on the surface. Rains can be heavy when they come, but the sandy soil soon absorbs the water. Dry winds evaporate the rest. Only the Nile is a reliable source of water for farming throughout the year.

How vital is the Nile? Ninety-five out of every 100 Egyptians live within 12 miles (19 km) of the Nile River or its delta. Yet this narrow river valley and the large delta make up only a small part of Egypt’s total area. Without the waters of the Nile, Egypt’s people could not survive.

Outside of the Nile valley, most of the region’s water needs are met with water that comes from oases and aquifers. **Aquifers** are underground layers of rock in which water collects. People use wells to tap into this water. Libya, for instance, relies on aquifers to meet almost all of its water needs. However, nearly half of Libya’s people have no access to water that has been treated to be sure it meets health standards.

A growing population in this region poses problems for the future. Demand for the water in an aquifer shared by Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia has increased ninefold in recent years. In North Africa, aquifers take a long time to refill. If people continue to take water out at a high rate, the aquifers might not be able to refill quickly enough and the region’s water problem will become much worse.

***Analyzing*** Why would aquifers take a long time to fill up in North Africa?

**LESSON 1 REVIEW**

**Reviewing Vocabulary**

1. In which desert feature can people live year-round, a *wadi* or an oasis? Why?

**Answering the Guiding Questions**

1. ***Describing*** How has the Mediterranean Sea affected the region?
2. ***Analyzing*** Does the northern or the southern chain of the Atlas Mountains receive more rainfall? Why?
3. ***Determining Central Ideas*** Which nations in the region are likely to import energy resources? Why?
4. ***Analyzing*** How can governments in the region prevent aquifers from being used up?
5. ***Informative/Explanatory Writing*** Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the climates of Egypt and Morocco.

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| **LESSON 2****The History of North Africa****ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How does religion shape society?** |
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| *One of the world’s first civilizations arose in North Africa thousands of years ago.***Ancient Egypt*****Why was ancient Egypt important?***Egypt, in North Africa, was one of the earliest known civilizations. Egyptian civilization arose along the Nile River, and Egyptians depended on the Nile for their livelihood. They built cities, organized government, and invented a writing system to keep records and create literature.**The Rise of Egypt**People have been living along the banks of the Nile River for thousands of years. As many as 8,000 years ago, people settled in the area to farm. The rich floodwaters of the Nile allowed farmers to produce enough food to support a growing population. Over time, some members of this early society began to do other things besides farming. Some made pottery. Others crafted jewelry. Some became soldiers. A few became kings.About 5,000 years ago, two kingdoms along the Nile were united into one. For most of the next 3,000 years, kings called **pharaohs** ruled the land. The great mass of people farmed the land. They paid a share of their crops to the government. The government’s leaders also made them work on important **projects**, or planned activities. These projects included building temples and other monuments. Sometimes the people had to fight in the pharaoh’s armies. |  |

**The Expansion of Egypt**

For centuries, Egypt traded with nearby lands. Merchants carried Egyptian grain and other products to the south. There they traded for luxury goods like gold, ivory, and incense. They also traded to the east for wood from what is now Lebanon.

Around 1500 B.C., the Egyptians decided to expand their area. They took control of lands to the south that held gold and seized areas along the Red Sea that had **myrrh**. This plant substance gives off a pleasing scent. Priests burned it in religious ceremonies. Egypt also conquered the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. That gave them control of the timber there. Egypt’s kings gained wealth by taxing conquered peoples.

**Religion and Culture in Ancient Egypt**

The pharaoh was the head of Egyptian society. He was seen as more than a man. He was thought to be the son of the sun god. The Egyptians practiced polytheism, which is the belief in many gods. The sun god was one of the most important of their gods. His daily journey through the sky brought the warmth needed to grow crops. The pharaoh, Egyptians believed, connected them to the gods. He made sure that they would flourish as a people.

Egyptians believed in life after death. Because of this belief, the pharaohs had vast tombs built for themselves. The tombs were filled with riches, food, and other goods. These goods were meant to support the pharaohs in the afterlife. When the pharaoh died, his body was preserved as a mummy and placed in the tomb.

At first the tombs were low structures built of bricks. Around 2600 B.C., the first pyramid was built as a tomb. These huge tombs, made of rock, were built by thousands of workers. Later, the pharaohs stopped building pyramids. Instead, workers carved their tombs out of rocky cliffs.

Historians know much about ancient Egypt because the Egyptians had a system of writing. The system, called **hieroglyphics**, used pictures to represent sounds or words.

**Influence of Ancient Egypt**

The Egyptians made many advances in mathematics and science. They used mathematics to measure farm fields and to figure out taxes. Their studies of the stars and planets led to advances in astronomy. They were masters of engineering as **demonstrated** by their great pyramids and temples.

Some of this knowledge was spread to other areas through trade and conquest. Later, Egypt had one of the world’s earliest libraries. It was built in the 200s B.C., when Greece conquered and ruled Egypt. The library stored many important works of ancient literature.

**Determining Central Ideas** Why is it important to know about ancient Egypt?

**The Middle Ages**

***How was North Africa connected to other areas?***

Today, people use the Internet to contact each other anywhere in the world. In ancient times, people had to make contact in person. The people of North Africa used the Mediterranean Sea to make this contact with other peoples. Sometimes they were joined by trade. Other times they were joined by conflict.

**Carthage and Rome**

Western North Africa was first visited by other Mediterranean peoples in the 600s B.C. At that time, traders from what is now Lebanon sailed southwest across the Mediterranean. They built new settlements in many areas. One was a city in what is now Tunisia. They called it Carthage. Within about 200 years, the city had grown powerful. It controlled North Africa from modern Tunisia to Morocco. It also ruled parts of modern Spain and Italy.

In the 200s B.C. and 100s B.C., Carthage fought three wars with the Roman Empire. In the last war, Rome defeated Carthage and destroyed the city. Rome, then, came to control western North Africa. Eventually, Rome conquered Egypt, as well.

During Roman times, many North Africans **converted**, or changed, religions. Because the Roman Empire had adopted Christianity, many North Africans converted to this religion. Others followed their native religions. Except for religion, Roman rule had little effect on native North Africans. Most people continued to live as before. Millions of Berbers who live in western North Africa today are descended from these native people.

**Rise of Islam**

The Roman Empire fell in the A.D. 400s. Afterward, several local kingdoms formed in North Africa. In the  A.D. 600s, though, a new influence emerged in the region. The religion of Islam was founded on the Arabian Peninsula by the prophet Muhammad in  A.D. 632. Followers of this religion—called Muslims—began to conquer other lands. By  A.D. 642, they had conquered Egypt. By A.D. 705, they ruled all of North Africa. Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is a monotheistic religion. **Monotheism** means belief in just one god.

**Islamic Rule**

The Muslim empire was ruled by the **caliph**. This figure had political and religious authority. Caliphs had trouble keeping control over North Africa, however. By the  A.D. 800s, separate Berber kingdoms had arisen in parts of the region. These kingdoms often fought one another. Some gained control of most of North Africa. Others only ruled parts of the area.

An Islamic group known as the Fatamids arose in Egypt in the A.D. 1000s. Its rulers expanded Cairo and made it their capital. The city became a center of Muslim learning and trade.

**Islamic Culture**

At first, Berbers and Egyptians resisted the Islamic religion. By the A.D.1000s, though, most of them had converted. They also adopted the Arabic language. This language and Islamic learning linked North Africa to the Muslim world. It also helped unite the cultures and people of North Africa and Southwest Asia. Considerable similarities between the regions exist to this day, more than 1,000 years later.

**Identifying Point of View** Did the Roman or the Islamic empire have more impact on North Africa? Why do you think so?

**The Modern Era**

***What leads people to revolt against a government?***

North Africans formed their own countries in the late 1900s. In recent decades, these countries have changed in far-reaching ways. Often, unrest accompanied the changes.

**Foreign Rule**

In the 1500s, North Africa began to fall under the rule of foreign armies. The Portuguese and Spanish captured parts of Morocco. The Ottoman Empire, based in modern Turkey, took the rest.

The 1800s saw Ottoman power weaken and Europeans move into North Africa. France began to conquer Algeria in 1830. Although it took several decades, by the late 1800s France controlled that area and Tunisia, too. Some Europeans who settled in these areas grew wealthy. Muslim natives, though, were largely poor. In the early 1900s, France and Spain split control of Morocco. At about the same time, Italy seized Libya.

Egypt kept its independence for much of the 1800s. Its kings tried to build a more modern state. One of the accomplishments was completing construction of the Suez Canal in 1869.

The Suez Canal quickly became a vital waterway. Because of the canal’s importance, though, other nations wanted to control Egypt. In 1882 Britain sent troops to Egypt. Kings continued to rule, but the British were the real power in the country.

**Independence**

Many North Africans resented European control. Independence movements arose across the region in the early 1900s. They gained strength after World War II. Italy had been defeated in the war, and France and Britain were severely weakened.

Egypt broke free of foreign control first. In 1952 a group of Egyptian army officers revolted against the king and the British. They created an independent republic, and they put the government in charge of the economy.

Algerians had to fight long and hard for independence. They rebelled against French rule starting in 1954. Not until 1962 did they succeed in ousting the French. Many Europeans fled the country after independence was achieved.

Military leaders also took control of Libya in 1969. They were led by Muammar al-Qaddafi. He remained in control of the nation—and its oil wealth—for more than 40 years. Tunisia and Morocco have avoided military rule. Tunisia has been a republic since gaining independence in 1959. Morocco has had a monarchy since gaining freedom from France in 1956.

**Recent Decades**

Independence has not always led to success for the countries of North Africa. Algeria has been plagued by unrest among Islamic political groups. Tunisia’s government was often accused by the U.S. government of neglecting the rights of the nation’s people. Libyan leader Qaddafi had a harsh **regime**, or style of government. Dissent was suppressed, and the government controlled all aspects of life. Qaddafi angered other nations by supporting terrorist groups.

Meanwhile, other problems built up in these nations. High population growth strained their economies. Corrupt governments fueled unrest. In recent years, Muslim **fundamentalists** have led a movement for the people and government to follow the strict laws of Islam. They also reject Western influences on Muslim society.

These problems came to a head in late 2010 in a series of revolts called the Arab Spring. The revolts began in Tunisia, where widespread unrest succeeded in convincing the longtime president to step down from power early in 2011. Tunisians celebrated as a new government took office.

Emboldened by this success, many Egyptians took to the streets. For more than two weeks, thousands of Egyptians turned out every day in Cairo and other cities to protest the government. This revolt also succeeded. In February 2011, Egypt’s longtime president Hosni Mubarak gave up power. A group of officers took control and promised to create a new government run by civilians. In 2012 Egyptians voted in the first free presidential election in the country’s history.

Unrest also arose in Morocco. There, the king agreed to several reforms that would give more power to the people.

The Arab Spring revolt also reached Libya. The government cracked down on protests. That response angered more Libyans. A **civil war**, or a fight for control of the government, broke out. After months of fighting, the rebels succeeded in taking control of the country. In October of 2011, they killed Qaddafi, and his remaining supporters gave up.

**Determining Central Ideas** How did the people of North Africa react to European control of the region? Compare that reaction to how North Africans reacted to rule by the Islamic Empire.

**LESSON 2 REVIEW**

**Reviewing Vocabulary**

1. How were the *pharaohs* of ancient Egypt and the *caliphs* of the Muslim empire similar? How were they different?

**Answering the Guiding Questions**

1. ***Identifying Point of View*** Why did the people of Egypt not revolt against the pharaoh even though they had to pay high taxes and work on major building projects?
2. ***Integrating Visual Information*** Look at a map of the world. What routes do you think the people of North Africa
3. traveled to trade with the people of Southwest Asia in the Middle Ages?
4. ***Determining Central Ideas*** What has caused unrest in North Africa in recent years?
5. ***Informative/Explanatory Writing*** Write a summary of the events and results of the Arab Spring.

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| **LESSON 3****Life in North Africa****ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Why do conflicts develop?** |
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| *North Africa is experiencing political changes.***Culture of North Africa*****What is daily life like in North Africa?***The vast majority of people in North Africa practice the Islamic religion. Five times a day, the call to prayer rings out from mosques across North Africa, and devout Muslims stop what they are doing to say prayers. Each week on Friday, millions assemble in the mosques for Friday prayer and to hear a sermon. Once a year during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims fast (do not eat) from dawn to dusk. **The People**Three main groups—Egyptians, Berbers, and Arabs—make up the population of North Africa. The region has a varied culture. Egypt’s ancient heritage looms over that nation just as the pyramids tower over some of its cities. French influence can be seen from Morocco to Tunisia. Although Arab Muslim culture dominates, some Berber traditions continue.Although most people are Muslims, some Christians and Jews also live in the region. One in 10 of Egypt’s people are Christians. Most of them belong to the Coptic Christian church, which formed in the A.D. 400s.Of the North African nations, Libya has the highest rate of urbanization. More than three of every four Libyans live in an urban area. Only about half of Egypt’s people are city dwellers. |  |

**Daily Life**

Patterns of daily life differ between the cities and the countryside. The region’s cities tend to be busy, bustling centers of industry and trade. They also are a blend of traditional cultures and modern life.

Towns and cities of North Africa show no signs of having been planned. Instead, they have grown steadily over the centuries. Streets are narrow and curving. Some built-up areas extend into the surrounding rural farming areas.

Cairo, Egypt, is by far North Africa’s largest city, with more than 9.3 million people. The next three largest cities are Algiers, Algeria; Casablanca, Morocco; and Tunis, Tunisia. Combined they have fewer people than Cairo.

Cairo’s buildings reflect its more than 1,000-year history. The waterfront along the Nile River boasts gleaming modern skyscrapers and parks. Throughout the city are historic mosques—Islamic places of worship. Tourists flock to the city’s famous museums, though they have to endure traffic jams to get there. A jumble of old apartment buildings spreads to the west. Beyond them, a million or so people live in mud huts in a massive poor neighborhood called “the City of the Dead.”

An important feature of North African cities is the **souk**, or open-air market. Here, businesspeople set up stalls where they sell food, craft products, and other goods. Singers and acrobats perform here and there in the markets, especially at night.

Life in rural areas follows a different pattern. Farming villages in rural Egypt can be as small as 500 people. Families live in homes built of mud brick with few windows. Each morning, the **fellaheen**—poor farmers of Egypt—walk to work in the fields outside the village. Many use hand tools and rely on muscle power or animal power. At day’s end, they return home.

Farms in Libya are clustered around oases. These communities are small because so little land can be farmed. In Morocco, many farmers live in the well-watered highland areas. They build terraces on steep hillsides to plant their crops.

Some rural dwellers still live like nomads. This is the same kind of life Berbers have followed for centuries. They tend herds of sheep, goats, or camels. They move from place to place in search of food and water for their herds. Some settle in one area for part of the year to grow grains.

**Food**

Moroccan food has gained fame around the world for its rich and complex flavors. The base of many Moroccan meals is **couscous**, small nuggets of semolina wheat that are steamed. Rich stews of meat and vegetables are poured over it. This style of cooking is also common in Algeria and Tunisia.

Sandwiches in this region are often made with flat pieces of pita bread. They might include grilled pieces of lamb, chicken, or fish. Falafel is made from ground, dried beans and formed into cakes and fried. Pigeon is also popular in Egypt and Morocco.

**Arts**

The arts in North Africa reflect the influence of Islam. The Islamic religion forbids art that shows the figures of animals or humans. Folk art, like weaving and embroidery, has intricate patterns but no figures. These patterns are also used to decorate buildings.

Many young people in North Africa are attracted to Western music and movies. This has provoked an angry response among some strict Muslims. In Algeria, some artists have left the country because of harsh criticism. Egypt has long been a center of television and film production. Its shows and movies are seen throughout the Arab world.

**Languages and Literature**

Arabic is the official language of all five countries in North Africa. French is prominent in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. French and English are most often heard in the region’s cities, but Berber languages are more common in rural areas.

As the largest Arabic-speaking country, Egypt has played an important part in the literature of the region. Egyptian writers have explored themes like the impact of influences from Western culture. Novelist Naguib Mahfouz, who wrote more than 30 novels and hundreds of stories, achieved worldwide recognition when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988.

***Identifying*** What is an example of the influence of Islam on daily life in North Africa?

**Challenges in North Africa**

***What challenges face North Africa?***

Standards of living vary widely across the region and even within countries. In addition to economic issues, the region faces significant social challenges.

**Economic Issues**

When oil was discovered in Libya, Muammar al-Qaddafi, the leader of the country, said that a major goal was to provide social benefits to everyone. That did not happen. The income gained from selling oil did not reach most of the country’s people. When Qaddafi fell from power in 2011, Libyans hoped that their lives would improve, but progress started slowly.

Algeria has tried to shift its economy away from the **emphasis** on the sale of oil and natural gas. The government keeps tight control of businesses, however. As a result, companies from other countries are not willing to invest there.

Morocco’s economy is the most **diversified**. A diversified economy includes a mix of many different economic activities. The people of the country engage in mining, some manufacturing, farming, and tourism. Poverty and unemployment are widespread in Morocco, however.

In recent years, thousands have left the region for Europe. They move mostly to Spain and France looking for jobs. Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia have lost the most people.

**Social Issues**

High population growth is a major concern in Libya and Egypt. This growth rate contributes to crowding and inadequate health care, as well as poverty. A large share of the population in the region is 14 years old or younger. This is especially true in Egypt and Libya. These countries will have to work hard to develop their economies so that today’s young people can find jobs in the future.

In February 2012, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addressed young people in Tunisia and across the region. She cited the work they did to bring about the massive changes of the Arab Spring. Clinton warned, though, that it would take a long time and hard work to build the country’s economy and increase jobs for young people. The U.S. government has pledged money to several countries to help them accomplish these goals.

Another issue is literacy. Libya has the highest literacy rate in the region: 89 percent of Libyans can read and write. The literacy rate is much lower in the other North African countries. Literacy is most serious in Morocco, where little more than one-half of Moroccans can read and write. A very low literacy rate among women is a major **factor**, or cause, for this trend. More than 65 percent of Moroccan men can read and write; less than 40 percent of that nation’s women can. Literacy among women is about 20 percent lower than among men in the other four countries of the region, as well. This gap hinders the ability of the countries to build strong economies.

***Identifying Point of View*** What might happen in North Africa if young people grow impatient with the slow rate of economic growth? Why?

**North Africa’s Future**

***How will North Africa address the problems it faces?***

Powerful new social movements have swept through the region of North Africa in recent years. They have led to major political changes in three countries and put pressures on the governments of the other two.

**Political Issues**

Two political forces are strong in the region of North Africa. One is a push for democracy. Many North Africans have grown more and more frustrated with their leaders. They think the leaders focused more on building their own power than on building the economy and improving their countries. Many question the government’s harsh treatment of people who criticize their countries’ leaders. Some leaders are calling for the different groups to learn to work together to avoid the conflicts that pull societies apart.

The second force was an increase in Islamic fundamentalism. Some strict Muslims want laws changed to conform to the rules of Islam. They want to see an end to Western influences on their culture. The political party of the Muslim Brotherhood gained a majority in Egypt’s parliament in the 2011 elections. It also won a majority in Morocco and a large share of seats in Tunisia. These forces helped bring about the Arab Spring of 2010 and 2011. They have left conditions across the region uncertain.

Egypt began writing a new **constitution** in 2012. A constitution is a set of rules for a nation and its government. Egypt’s new government could give more power to the parliament, the lawmaking body. It is not clear how well this new government will work or what groups will control it, though.

For nearly 20 years, Algeria has undergone brutal conflict between Islamist groups and the government and its forces. As many as 100,000 people have died in the fighting. As in Morocco, the government was able to keep power after the Arab Spring, but it had to promise to reform the political system.

By 2012, Libya’s victorious rebels were working on making a new government. They also faced the need to rebuild much of the country after the civil war. In 2012, leaders in eastern Libya said they wanted self-rule in their part of the country. Although they said that they did not wish to divide the country or to keep their area’s oil wealth for themselves, the move raised the possibility of continued conflict in Libya.

**Islam in the Modern World**

Many Muslims in the region worry about the impact of Western culture on their lands. They think that Western entertainment conflicts with Islamic values. They also disagree with Western ideas about women’s rights.

Women in North Africa generally have more rights than those in other Muslim lands. In Tunisia, for instance, they can own businesses and have their own bank accounts. About half of all university students in Tunisia are women. Women may lose some of these rights if extreme Muslim leaders take control of the governments.

Several million of Egypt’s Coptic Christians have grown more worried about their position in recent years as well. Some Muslim extremists have attacked them and bombed churches. Early in 2012, the longtime head of the Coptic church died. He had led the church for nearly 40 years in relative peace until near the end of his life. His death increased the uncertainty for Copts in that area.

**Relations with Other Nations**

Egypt broke ranks with other Muslim nations in 1979 when it signed a peace treaty with Israel. It has also developed close ties with the United States since then. That friendship has come under increasing criticism from Muslim fundamentalists. Morocco has also had close relations with the United States. Its government has been criticized for this as well.

These situations raise more questions about what will happen if Muslim conservatives gain power. Will the new governments reject close ties with the United States? Will they take steps against Israel?

The situations in Algeria and Libya are also uncertain. Will new governments there be less willing to sell oil to the United States? For what purposes will they use the money they earn from selling oil? The answers to these questions will help to shape the future of North Africa and the world.

***Analyzing*** Why were the results of the Arab Spring different in Algeria and Morocco compared with the other countries of the region?

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| **LESSON 3****Life in North Africa****ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Why do conflicts develop?** |
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| **LESSON 3 REVIEW****Reviewing Vocabulary**1. Is it important for an economy to be *diversified*? Why or why not?

**Answering the Guiding Questions**1. ***Determining Central Ideas*** Why do you think many Muslims worrry about the impact of Western culture on their lands?
2. ***Describing*** How is the relatively young population connected to the economic issues in these nations?
3. ***Analyzing*** About half of Egypt’s people live in rural areas. Most of them are farmers. What impact does that have on

Egypt’s economy? Why? 1. ***Identifying Point of View*** Why is the political situation in North Africa important to the United States?
2. ***Argument Writing*** Do you think the most serious issues facing North Africa are political, social, or cultural?
3. Write a paragraph explaining why.
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