

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Oil in the Middle East**

Two of the most important **natural resources** found in Southwest Asia are **natural gas** and **oil**. These two resources bring wealth into the region because they are needed for much of the world's economy. Deposits of underground oil and natural gas were discovered in Southwest Asia at the beginning of the 1900s. At first, companies from the United States and Europe controlled the drilling and refining of most of this oil, but now most of the oil operations are controlled by the countries themselves. Over half of the world's known oil reserves are found in this part of the world. This has made some of these countries extremely rich and has led them to have a lot of control over the global economy.

In the 1960s, several of these Southwest Asian countries joined with other oil-rich countries around the world to create the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** in order to have more control over the price of oil on the world market. OPEC has called for an embargo (slow-down or temporary halt) to oil supplies at different times in the past to get political and economic agreements from other countries in the world. While some countries in Southwest Asia have grown very rich due to their oil production others have struggled to help their populations make a decent living.

The Southwest Asian countries with the greatest reserves of natural gas and oil are Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait. Some other countries have smaller reserves, especially those found around the Arabian Gulf. These countries have enjoyed tremendous growth in national wealth and an improved standard of living in the past fifty years. Those countries without oil reserves have had a much harder time improving living conditions for their populations. This difference in wealth in some of the Southwest Asian countries has led to conflicts among the nations.

1. What are the two most valuable natural resources in Southwest Asia?
2. How much of the world's oil supply is found in Southwest Asia?
3. How has the discovery of oil in some Southwest Asian countries affected the economic development of this area?
  - a. Those with oil need less water than the other countries around them.
  - b. Having oil has made very little difference in the economy of this region.
  - c. The discovery of oil has meant that no other industries have developed in the region.
  - d. Those countries with oil reserves are much richer than those countries that have not found oil in their territory.
4. Which countries are the most oil-rich in the Southwestern Asian region?
5. Why does OPEC play a powerful role in the world economy today?
  - a. OPEC controls the oil in the world market
  - b. This organization is part of the United Nations.
  - c. OPEC builds dams along rivers shared by several countries.
  - d. OPEC membership includes many oil companies owned by firms in the United States.