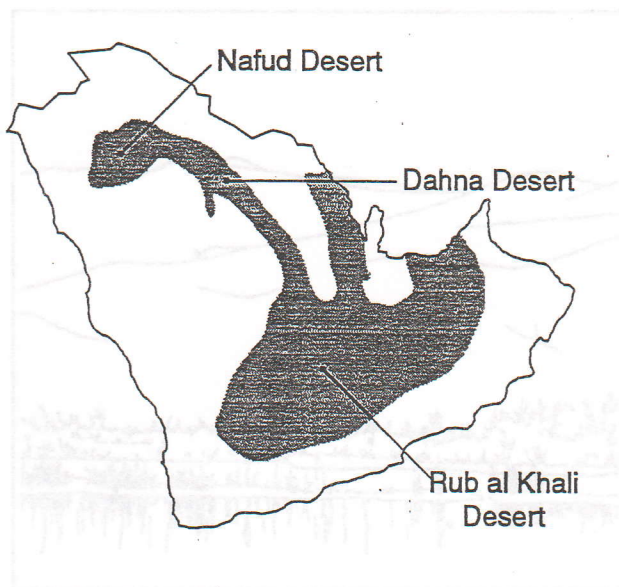
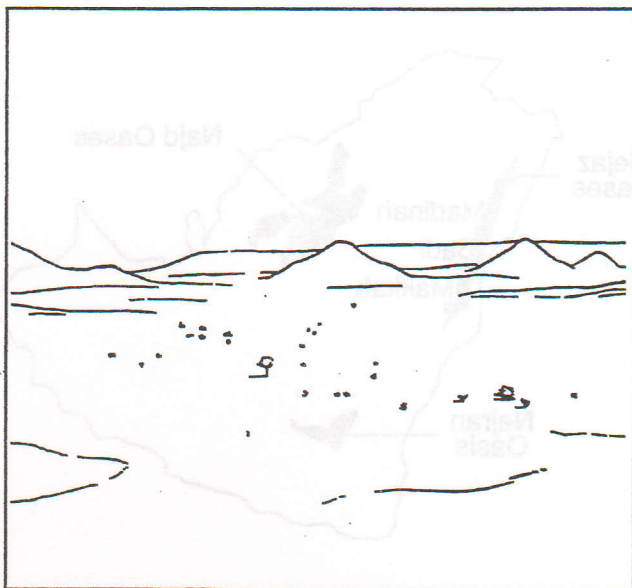


Deserts

The desert climate is extreme. Summer temperatures often exceed 120 degrees in the shade, while winter temperatures sometimes drop below freezing. The lack of rainfall—10 inches or less per year—prevents the development of a solid cover of vegetation in the desert. Particles of sand and dirt are easily picked up by the desert winds and shaped into huge dunes, some of which may reach heights of 500 feet. The sand of the desert may be hard-packed, rippled, or loose so that people and animals sink into it easily. Although not fertile regions, the deserts of Arabia do contain wells of salty water, low shrubs, and clumps of tough grass that provide good grazing for animals such as camels, sheep, goats, and jackrabbits.

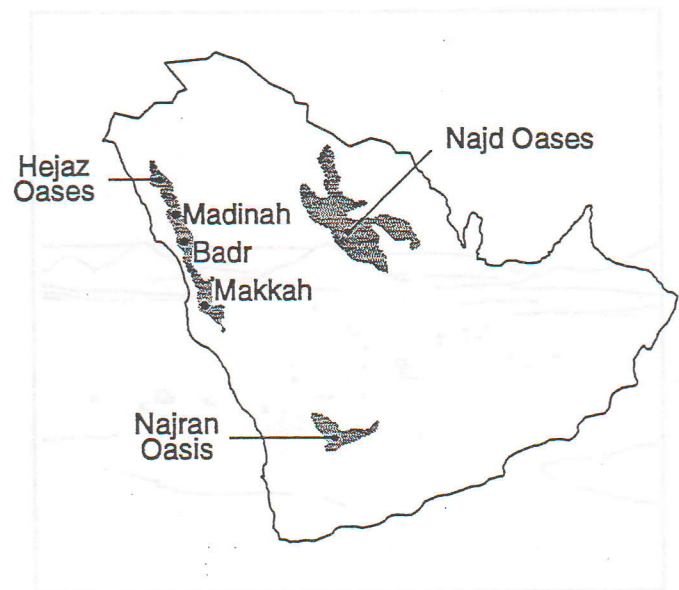


Critical Thinking Questions A:

1. Describe the type of clothing that would be most comfortable and practical in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula.
2. Using the natural materials of the Arabian desert, what types of shelter could people build to give them the best protection in this environment?
3. What form of transportation would be most efficient in a desert environment like the Arabian Peninsula?

Oases

An oasis is a fertile (capable of producing food and vegetation) place in the desert. Summer days are so hot in the Arabian Peninsula that most rainwater either quickly evaporates or sinks into deep underground river channels. Oasis settlements in Arabia depended upon wells and springs to trap this underground water. The presence of water made the cultivation (to use for growing crops) of oasis land possible. Vegetation in oases consisted of date palms, orchard crops (citrus fruits, apricots, peaches, pomegranates, and figs), and common ground crops (wheat and alfalfa). Of all the crops the ancient Arabians harvested, however, none were as important as frankincense and myrrh, the gum resins (a semisolid substance) of two trees. Frankincense and myrrh were used for religious, medicinal, sanitary, and cosmetic purposes.



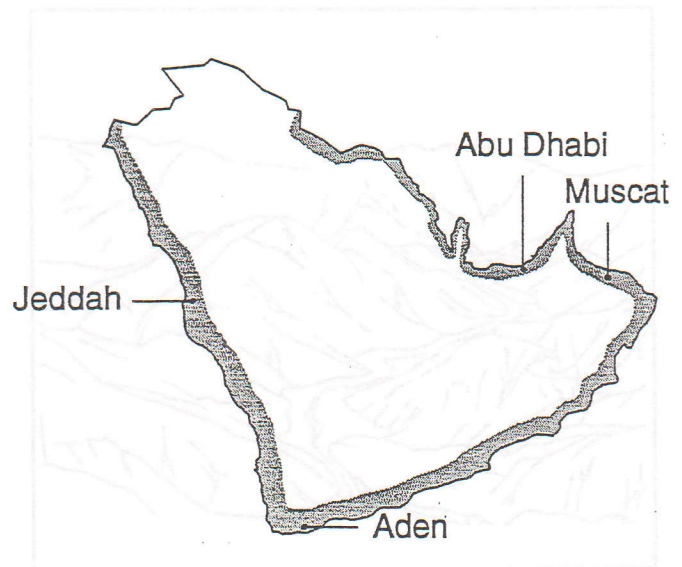
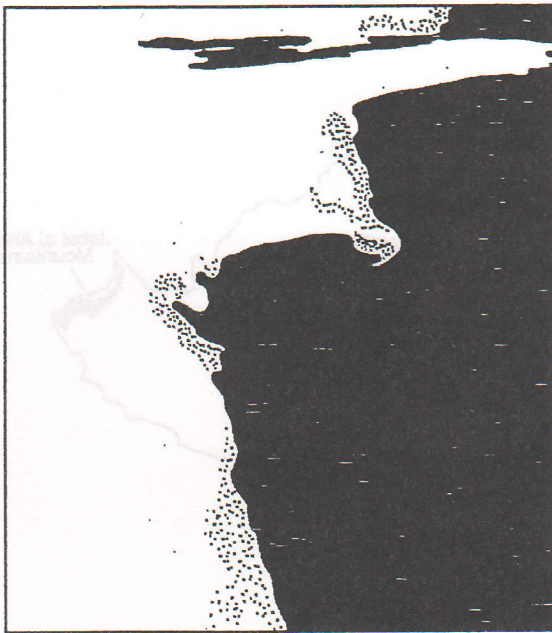
Critical Thinking Questions B:

1. Why would the date palm be considered a perfect form of vegetation for the dry climate of Arabia?

2. Why would oases be important centers for trade in the Arabian Peninsula?

Coastal Plain

A coastal plain is level land that extends along a coast, separating a plateau (elevated, level land) from the sea. The long, narrow coastal plain of the Arabian Peninsula is much more humid (damp and moist) than the interior region because of its proximity (nearness) to the sea. As a result of its humid climate, the coastal plain region contains most of the cultivated (used for growing crops) land of the Arabian Peninsula. The agriculture of the southwestern region is the most extensive and varied; it includes coffee, grains, and fruits. The coastal plain region also contains most of the trading cities and ports that have connected the region with the rest of Asia and Africa for 3,000 years.

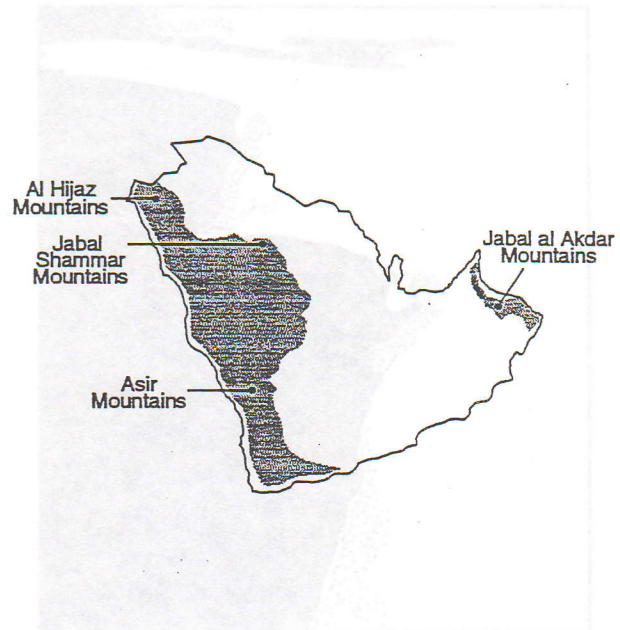


Critical Thinking Questions C:

1. Why would cities develop along the coastal plain of Arabia?
2. How would life in the coastal plain differ from life in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula?

Mountains

Mountains stretch along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula about 50 miles from the sea. Because these mountains catch what little moisture is carried by the winds that move across the Arabian Peninsula, their climate is very different from that of the interior basin. Throughout most of the year, the climate of the mountains is balmy (mild) during the day and clear at night. At the height of the rainy season, tremendous downpours and flash floods are common. During the winter, it occasionally snows. The coastal mountains of the western and northern regions have steep slopes on both the sea side and interior side, making survival difficult for all but the wild goats. In the southern and western regions, the mountains are rugged with juniper forests interspersed among jagged rocks and steep slopes.



Critical Thinking Questions D:

1. How could people prevent the rain water from running down the steep mountainside so that it could be used for agriculture?
2. Why might the culture of the mountain communities remain less changed over time than the communities of the deserts, oases, or coastal plains?