

Name: _____

FAST FACTS ON IRAQ

Learn the basics about Iraq, a country with a rich history and a troubled recent past. Then answer the questions below.

Area 169,235 square miles (slightly larger than California).

Population

24,451,000 (That's less than one-tenth of the U.S. population.)

Economy Oil has played a key role in Iraq's economy for 50 years. War with Iran in the 1980s and the Persian Gulf war in 1991 greatly damaged its ability to produce oil. United Nations trade sanctions, imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, have kept many supplies from reaching the country. While the country's leaders still live in luxury, the standard of living for most Iraqi people has drastically declined during the last 12 years.

Religion Islam, 95 percent. Christianity and others, 5 percent.

Government Saddam Hussein became President in 1979. Iraq's constitution states that the country is a republic (a government of elected representatives), but Hussein rules as a dictator, controlling virtually all aspects of Iraqi life. He leads the Baath Party, which took control of the government in 1968 and eventually eliminated all opposition.

Languages

Arabic is Iraq's official language. Kurdish is spoken in some areas.

Flag The colors of the Iraqi flag are red, white, green, and black.



History Some of the world's first civilizations arose in Iraq around 3500 B.C., between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Arabs conquered the region in the 7th century A.D., bringing Islam with them. Baghdad, founded in 750 as the capital of the Arab Empire, became a great cultural and trade center. For 400 years, beginning in the early 1500s, the area was part of the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, Great Britain took control of the region. Iraq gained independence from British rule in 1932. In 1980, the year after Hussein became President, Iraq started a war with neighboring Iran that would last 8 years and cost more than 1 million lives. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Hussein's army was driven from Kuwait by U.S.-led forces during the Persian Gulf war in 1991.

Climate

Mild winters, except in the northern mountain regions, where winters are cold with heavy snows. The summers are dry and hot, averaging more than 100°F.

Questions

1. What is the name of Saddam Hussein's political party? _____
2. What language besides Arabic is spoken in some areas of Iraq? _____
3. What religion is practiced by the great majority of Iraqi people? _____
4. From what government did Iraq gain independence in 1932? _____
5. On a separate sheet of paper, list the factors that have damaged Iraq's ability to produce oil during the last 20 years.