

Activities

Activity 3

Getting to Know Basic Geographic Facts about Israel

Preparation

Estimated Time: 1 class period • **Materials:** Blank map of Israel and question sheet. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Land/THE+LAND-+Geography+and+Climate.htm>

Lesson Plan: Students answer the question sheet and fill in the blank map of Israel. Students can get the information from an Atlas, Encyclopedia or on the internet. Students fill in the blank map with basic facts they learn about Israel's size, topography, population distribution, water resources and land use.

Background: So much media focus is on the Palestinian-Israel conflict that the general public often is unaware of the fact that Israel is a thriving country with enormous geographic, economic and cultural diversity. The activity is designed to familiarize students with this diversity and its impact on Israel's economic and security concerns.

Activity

1. Have students work in pairs. Pass out the blank map and question sheet, and tell students to use different resources to find the answers. [Suggested resources are listed below.]
2. Students fill in the blank map with the answers they have researched.
3. Discuss with students the implications of their findings in terms of Israel's economy, culture, security, and development.

Wrap-Up: Israel is a small country with great topographic diversity and limited natural resources. These features have posed special challenges to Israel's economic development and security needs. These facts are critical for understanding Israeli policies and priorities

Question Sheet for Israel's Geography and Demography

Instructions: Use the blank outline of the map of Israel to fill in the following information. You can find answers to these questions by searching the internet or using an up-to-date Encyclopedia.

1. How long is Israel in miles? How wide is it at its narrowest point and at its widest point? How long would it take to drive the length of Israel? How long would it take to drive the width of Israel?
2. Where is most of Israel's population concentrated? What are its major cities, and what is their population?
3. What are Israel's four main geographic regions, and where are they located?
4. Where are the highest and lowest points in Israel?
5. Locate Israel's water and other natural resources.
6. Locate the mountain ranges in Israel, and their relationship to Israel's population centers.
7. What features of Israel's geography have led to the statement that though very small, Israel has the geographic diversity of a continent?

Teacher Answer Sheet for Israel's Geography and Demography

1. Long and narrow, Israel is 290 miles long from its northern point at Metulla to its southern point at Eilat.

Israel is 85 miles across at its widest point from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, and 9 miles across from Netanya on the coast to Tulkarm in the West Bank.

It takes approximately 6 hours to drive the length of Israel, about 90 minutes to drive across at its widest point, and only a few minutes at its narrowest point.

2. Over half of Israel's population is concentrated along its coastal plain which includes major urban centers, deep-water harbors, most of the country's industry and a large part of its agriculture and tourist facilities.

92% of Israelis live in 200 cities and towns. 5% live in rural cooperative communities called kibbutzim or moshavim.

Cities	Population
Jerusalem	729,000
Tel Aviv-Yafo	371,400
Haifa	268,250
Rishon Lezion	217,400
Ashdod	196,900
Be'er Sheva	184,500
Netanya	169,400

3. Israel's four main geographic regions include three parallel strips running north to south, and a large, mostly arid zone in the southern half. The three parallel strips are:

Coastal plain: Sandy shoreline that runs parallel to the Mediterranean and is bordered by fertile farmland that extends up to 25 miles inland.

Jezeel Valley: Israel's richest agricultural area, which is cultivated by many cooperative communities (kibbutzim and moshavim).

Mountain ranges: Several ranges run the length of the country, including the Golan Heights and the Galilee Hills which has perennial streams and relatively ample rainfall.

The southern region is the Negev which comprises about half of Israel's land area. Its northern section includes agriculture and industry, but further south the Negev becomes an arid zone that gives way to an area of bare craggy peaks, craters and rock-strewn plateaus.

Arava: The savannah region which begins south of the Dead Sea and extends down to Eilat, located at Israel's entry to the Red Sea.

4. Israel's highest point is Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights at 7,330 feet. Israel's lowest point, is the Dead Sea which is 1300 feet below sea level. It is the lowest point on earth.

5. Water is a scarce commodity in the Middle East.

Israel's water sources consist of the Jordan River, Lake Kinneret and a few small river systems. The lack of abundant sources of fresh water and its location on the edge of a desert belt, both contribute to Israel's continued scarcity of water. The total annual renewable water resources amount to some 60 billion cubic feet (1.7 billion cu.m.), of which about 65 percent is used for irrigation and the balance for urban and industrial purposes. Natural springs and underground water tables, tapped in controlled quantities to prevent depletion and salination, are also utilized. Israel built its National Water Carrier in 1964 to carry water from the north to the arid south.

Israel has few natural resources. They include: potash, copper ore, phosphate rock, magnesium bromide and clays. Other resources for Israel are sand, natural gas and timber.

6. Israel's mountain ranges run the length of the country, and include the Golan Heights on the border with Syria, and the range in the Galilee. A "spine" runs down north and south down the center of the region which includes the Samaria hills in the north and the Judean hills in the south. The West Bank is located along these ridges which look down on Israel's central population areas.

7. Israel has been described as having the geographic diversity of a continent because, despite its small size, it has a wide variety of terrains within short distances of each other—deserts, beaches, mountains, fertile valleys and savannahs.

Sources for this exercise:

Land Use map of Israel at <http://geography.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/israel.html>

The MFA website has some good material for this with maps at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Land/THE+LAND-+Geography+and+Climate.htm>

And at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/land/>