

Review of *Geography: The Human and Physical World*, McGraw-Hill

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 15: North Africa Lesson: 2: Human Geography of North Africa Page (within lesson): 6	
Passage	“Although women participated in winning independence, women’s issues were not priorities in the years immediately following independence. Government rule often stifled human rights. This affected women’s issues as well, and many women are not permitted to accept jobs even when they have an education level higher than men.”
Rewording	...many women were not permitted to accept jobs even when they had an education level higher than men. In time, however, educated women entered the workforce as education systems increased literacy and opportunities.
Rationale	Tenses were mixed, though the statement is historical. The sentence “Government rule often stifled human rights” is too vague to help students understand the actions of these North African governments. What specific human rights were stifled? It is also not true to leave the impression that educated women were denied jobs. Women became prominent as mass education increased levels from basic literacy to higher education from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 15: North Africa Lesson: 3: People and Their Environment: North Africa Page (within lesson): 5	
Passage	Land degradation from desertification is an environmental issue in all of the North African countries and is human induced. Soil erosion as a result of farming, overgrazing, and destruction of vegetation contributes to desertification. Increasingly, evidence shows that land degradation is a driver of climate change. The other causes of land degradation include drought, population pressure, and local agricultural and land use policies.
Rewording	Land degradation from desertification is an environmental issue in all of the North African countries and is human induced. Soil erosion as a result of farming, overgrazing, and destruction of vegetation contributes to desertification. This land degradation largely began during the colonial era when farming practices changed rapidly. Increasingly, evidence shows that land degradation is a driver of climate change. The other causes of land degradation include drought, population pressure, and local agricultural and land use policies.
Rationale	The declensionist environmental narrative is largely the product of “French colonial scientists, administrators, military men, and settlers” as an effort to justify their appropriation of North African land resources (Diana K. Davis, <i>Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa</i> pg.1). Traditional farming methods used by Algerians before the invasion of French colonial authorities were “some of the most appropriate and sustainable” methods for the local ecology (Davis pg. 15). The agricultural practices of the French colonial era, however, did contribute to the deforestation and degradation of North African land.

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 1	
Passage	“From the 1880s through the 1940s many European Jews immigrated to the Palestinian Mandate.”
Rewording	“From the 1880s through the 1940s many European Jews immigrated to the land of Palestine.”
Rationale	The Palestinian Mandate only existed from 1920-1948.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 1	
Passage	“The Arabs rejected the UN partition, whereas the Jews accepted it and the Zionists established the state of Israel.”
Rewording	“The surrounding Arab states rejected the UN partition because it gave away over half of Palestinian land to Jews even though Palestinians made up 94% of the population. The Jews accepted it and the Zionists established the state of Israel.”
Rationale	1) It is unclear who “the Arabs” are in this sentence. 2) The text should explain why Arab leaders and states rejected the partition plan while the Jewish delegation accepted it (namely that the plan allotted 55% of the region of Palestine to the Israeli state and only 45% to Arabs even though Arabs owned 94% of the total land area of Palestine in 1947) (see Eugene Rogan’s <i>The Arabs: A History</i> pgs. 252-3).

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 1	
Passage	“In 1948 the British withdrew and the State of Israel was created. Israel was then attacked by five Arab states in the first of several wars. At the end of the war, Egypt controlled Gaza, while Jordan controlled the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the Old City, preventing Jews from accessing the Western Wall of the ancient Temple complex, the holiest site in Judaism.”
Rewording	“In 1948 the British withdrew and the State of Israel was created. Israel was then attacked by five Arab states in the first of several wars. At the end of the war, Egypt controlled Gaza, while Jordan controlled the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the Old City, preventing Jews from accessing the Western Wall of the ancient Temple complex, the holiest site in Judaism. Israel prevented Arabs from accessing newly claimed Israeli land and blocked Arabs freedom of movement.”
Rationale	If the text acknowledges how Arabs limited the access of Jews to holy sites, the text should also explain how Israel limited the freedom of movement of Arabs.

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 2	
Passage	“What is the Israeli perspective?”
Rewording	“What are some common Israeli perspectives?”
Rationale	The current language homogenizes the variety of perspectives held by Israelis. By adding the word “some common perspectives” making perspectives plural, and adding a sentence explaining that Israelis hold many different perspectives, the text will acknowledge this diversity. One of the key skills in the study of history is recognizing and analyzing multiple perspectives. There are differences among Jews who emigrated from Europe, from the former Soviet Union, and those who came from Middle Eastern countries after the creation of Israel, people of different classes, settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, religious and non-religious Jews, etc.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 2	
Passage	“In 1973 Egypt and Syria attacked Israel, launching the Yom Kippur War. Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula in 1982. In the 1993 Oslo Accords, Israel agreed to limited self-rule in the Palestinian territories. Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005.”
Rewording	
Rationale	For a section that is supposed to explain the “Israeli perspective,” these four sentences simply list off a series of dates and do not help students learn how Israelis understand their history. This passage should be rewritten to better focus on how Israelis conceptualize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 3	
Passage	“What is the Palestinian perspective?”
Rewording	“What are some common Palestinian perspectives?”
Rationale	Same issue as above. The current language homogenizes the variety of perspectives held by Palestinians. By adding the words “some common,” making perspectives plural, and adding a sentence explaining why Palestinians hold many different perspectives, the text will acknowledge this diversity. Differences between urban and rural, upper and lower classes, religious and secular-minded Palestinians of different political views, and those who were expelled from their homes and are refugees in their own land, those living inside Israel’s borders, and those in lands occupied by the Israeli military after the wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973. Any reasonable accounting of history must include multiple perspectives and demographic and other factors behind them.

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: 2: Human Geography of the Eastern Mediterranean Page (within lesson): 2	
Passage	“Muslim beliefs were recorded in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam.”
Rewording	“The Quran is the sacred text of Islam, which Muslims believe was revealed to Prophet Muhammad from God.”
Rationale	This sentence is misleading. Muslims believe that the Quran is the direct word of God which was revealed through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. The constitutional guidelines for teaching about religion simply require that beliefs be attributed to and accurately reflect those of the religion’s adherents.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: 2: Human Geography of the Eastern Mediterranean Page (within lesson): 3	
Passage	“The Jews wanted an internationally recognized homeland in a part of the Mandate. The Arabs wanted all of Palestine.”
Rewording	“Many Jews wanted an internationally recognized homeland in a part of the Mandate while many Arabs wanted the same land that they had lived on for centuries.”
Rationale	<p>1) The current passage homogenizes both sides’ views and does not account for the variation in opinions on both sides. Some Jews wanted to claim all of mandate Palestine. Followers of the Zionist Revisionist movement, for example, advocated for a Jewish homeland on both sides of the Jordan River. Some Arabs wanted all of Palestine, but others recognized the need to compromise with Jewish claims and the power of the Britain and the former colonial powers in the post-independence world.</p> <p>2) The passage acknowledges why the Jews wanted territory in part of the Mandate (because it was considered their homeland) but does not explain why Arabs had long ties to the land as well. A well-balanced account presents both sides’ claims to the land.</p>

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 16: Eastern Mediterranean Lesson: 2: Human Geography of the Eastern Mediterranean Page (within lesson): 7	
Passage	“Women’s rights in the Arab world have been changing drastically in the past few decades. In some countries women drive cars, own property, obtain advanced education, and pursue high-level jobs in government and industry. In other places, girls and women have few opportunities outside the home.”
Rewording	“Women’s rights in the Arab world have changed during the past century. As in other parts of the modernizing world, women have fought for their rights. In most Arab countries women drive cars, own property, obtain advanced education, and pursue high-level jobs in government and industry. In a few countries, women’s status is more restricted.”

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia | **Chapter:** 16: Eastern Mediterranean | **Lesson:** 2: Human Geography of the Eastern Mediterranean | **Page (within lesson):** 7

Rationale	<p>The term “Arab world” is not useful in teaching geography, especially because the chapter title is N Africa, SW Asia, and Central Asia, so it is concerned with Turkey, Iran, and other non-Arabic speaking countries. The text also creates a binary impression about women’s roles in Middle Eastern societies. There is only one country where women driving was an issue. Nothing is mentioned in the paragraph about women in business, professions, and government, where they are clearly present. According to the UN Development Programme statistics, in numerous wealthy countries of the region, the number of women in higher education exceeds that of men (See Arab Human Development Report, UNDP 2016, p. 91 at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/2699/ahdr2016en.pdf) A more complex picture is not difficult to draw using very accessible sources, if the authors did a bit of research instead of re-hashing outdated textbooks from the past.</p>
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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia | **Chapter:** 17: The Northeast | **Lesson:** 2: Human Geography of the Northeast | **Page (within lesson):** 2

Passage	<p>“Once part of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq became an independent state in 1932. It has experienced considerable turmoil since. This includes a war with Iran (1980–1988) and two wars against the United States and coalition forces. The most recent occurred between 2003 and 2011. It resulted in the arrest, conviction, and execution of dictator Saddam Hussein and the establishment of a parliamentary democracy.”</p>
Rewording	<p>“Once part of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq became an independent state in 1932. It has experienced considerable turmoil since. This includes a war with Iran (1980–1988), a war against Kuwait and international coalition forces and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq from 2003 to 2011. The most recent occurred between 2003 and 2011 when the United States invaded Iraq. While Iraq’s dictator Saddam Hussein was overthrown and a parliamentary democracy was established, the invasion caused extreme Iraqi civilian casualties and created a political environment where extremist groups could emerge, and sectarian divisions disrupted social and political institutions.”</p>
Rationale	<p>The current language presents the United States as the savior of Iraq by arresting Saddam Hussein and implementing a democratic system. It also represents the 2003 invasion as if it had been a “war against the United States,” when in fact Iraq committed no aggression to provoke that war, which was ostensibly to remove alleged weapons of mass destruction. The United States’ invasion of Iraq had extreme negative consequences on the country, such as a colossal death toll of Iraqi civilians, the exacerbation of sectarian conflict, and the creation of a political vacuum where extremist groups were able to emerge, and sectarian divisions were exacerbated.</p>

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 17: The Northeast Lesson: Page (within lesson): 5	
Passage	“Turkey, Iraq, and Iran all support systems of free public education. The amount of education a child receives in a lifetime is 13 years in Iran, 12 years in Turkey, and 10 years in Iraq.”
Rewording	Turkey, Iraq and Iran all support systems of free public education from primary to university. Education levels differ in rural and urban areas, among boys and girls. Average levels of education are 13 years in Iran, 12 years in Turkey, and 10 years in Iraq.
Rationale	This passage is unclear. What does the “amount of education” refer to? The average amount of education is not a very useful figure, but at least it should be identified, and a sense of the causes of differences.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 18: The Arabian Peninsula Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 1	
Passage	“What actions can be taken to help migrant workers? Migrant workers have few rights and are not protected under most labor laws.”
Rewording	“What actions can be taken to help migrant workers? While migrant workers have rights protected under most labor laws, these laws are often not enforced by governmental officials.”
Rationale	Actually, most Gulf countries have laws that protect migrant workers. For example, the UAE law concerning the treatment of migrant laborers explicitly outlaws taking laborers’ passports, denying payment of wages, and undertaking contract switching. The issue, however, is with the enforcement of these laws. The Ministry of Labor, who is responsible for overseeing these laws, is understaffed and often has conflicts of interest. The use of contractors and subcontractors in the construction industry further complicates the oversight process by creating multiple levels of non-transparent bureaucracy (see Ahmed Kanna’s <i>Dubai: City as Corporation</i> pg. 44)

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 18: The Arabian Peninsula Lesson: 2: Human Geography of the Arabian Peninsula Page (within lesson): 5	
Passage	“Islamic law, or shari’ah, governs every aspect of a Muslim’s life.”
Rewording	“Islamic law, or shari’ah, guides many aspects of a Muslim’s life.”
Rationale	The term “governs every” is too bold. As is, this sentence homogenizes Muslims’ various degrees of piety. No textbook would include a sentence saying, for example, “Canon law governs every aspect of a Christian’s life.” Shari’ah includes guidance about how to carry out worship duties, as well as moral guidance similar to the Christian and Jewish ten commandments. The original sentence is not based on or conducive to any sound understanding of the subject.

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 18: The Arabian Peninsula Lesson: 18: The Arabian Peninsula Page (within lesson): 6	
Passage	“Once they are married, most women are expected to stay at home to take care of the children and provide a comfortable home for their husbands. In most countries, a married woman has domestic help, usually female Asian guest workers. The male head of household is the ultimate authority in the home.”
Rewording	“Once they are married, some women are expected to stay at home to take care of the children. However, women are increasingly pursuing careers outside of the house as well. Among wealthy classes, married women often have domestic help from lower-class women or in some countries foreign women as guest workers.”
Rationale	1) This passage reinforces stereotypes that have been long entrenched in Americans’ (mis)understandings of Arab societies. While many women are expected to stay home (just as these norms exist in the United States), gender norms are shifting in many households in the Gulf and in the Arab region at large (see Fereshteh Nourale-Simone’s <i>On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era</i>).

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 18: The Arabian Peninsula Lesson: 2: Human Geography of the Arabian Peninsula Page (within lesson): 7	
Passage	“Islamic architecture is uniquely beautiful.”
Rewording	“The beauty of Islamic architecture lies in its interplay of space and surface decoration. Many mosques, for example, feature high domes covered in geometric designs, forests of columns, and brilliant tiles.”
Rationale	While positive, this sentence is purely subjective and does not help students to understand Islamic architecture. Assuming there will be images on the page, a few descriptive words can be added.

Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia Chapter: 18: Central Asia Lesson: Why Geography Matters Page (within lesson): 3	
Passage	“Afghanistan’s economy has begun to recover since the fundamentalists were ousted, and the economy has the potential for development.”
Rewording	“Afghanistan’s economy has begun to recover since the Taliban was ousted from power, and the economy has the potential for development.”
Rationale	1) The term “fundamentalism” is too often used as a pejorative that is paired with Islam to fuel the idea that Islam is an aberration and has no positive or normal iteration as a religion in modern society. Rather, fundamentalism is a broad movement that seeks to reassert early Islamic values and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (see Karen Armstrong’s <i>The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism</i> and https://www.brookings.edu/events/what-is-religious-fundamentalism/). While some groups have based their violent actions on fundamentalist teachings, the definition of fundamentalism should not be narrowed to only describe these groups. 2) While the Taliban was removed from power, it has recently reemerged as a political actor.

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Unit: 5: North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia | **Chapter:** 18: Central Asia | **Lesson:** 2: Human Geography of Central Asia | **Page (within lesson):** 7

Passage	“After the republics gained independence, however, the shift to traditional Islamic practices resulted in women losing rights and opportunities in some of these countries.”
Rewording	“After the republics gained independence, however, women lost rights and opportunities in some of these countries. Human rights were lost to men and women as governments remained authoritarian.”
Rationale	This sentence implies that traditional Islamic practices oppress women, a narrative that has been rejected by most contemporary scholars of Islam (see Lila Abu Lughod’s <i>Do Muslim Women Need Saving?</i>). As the added sentence notes, loss of rights was not restricted to women, nor was it especially caused by religious fervor, which authoritarian governments often use as a ploy to gain legitimacy.