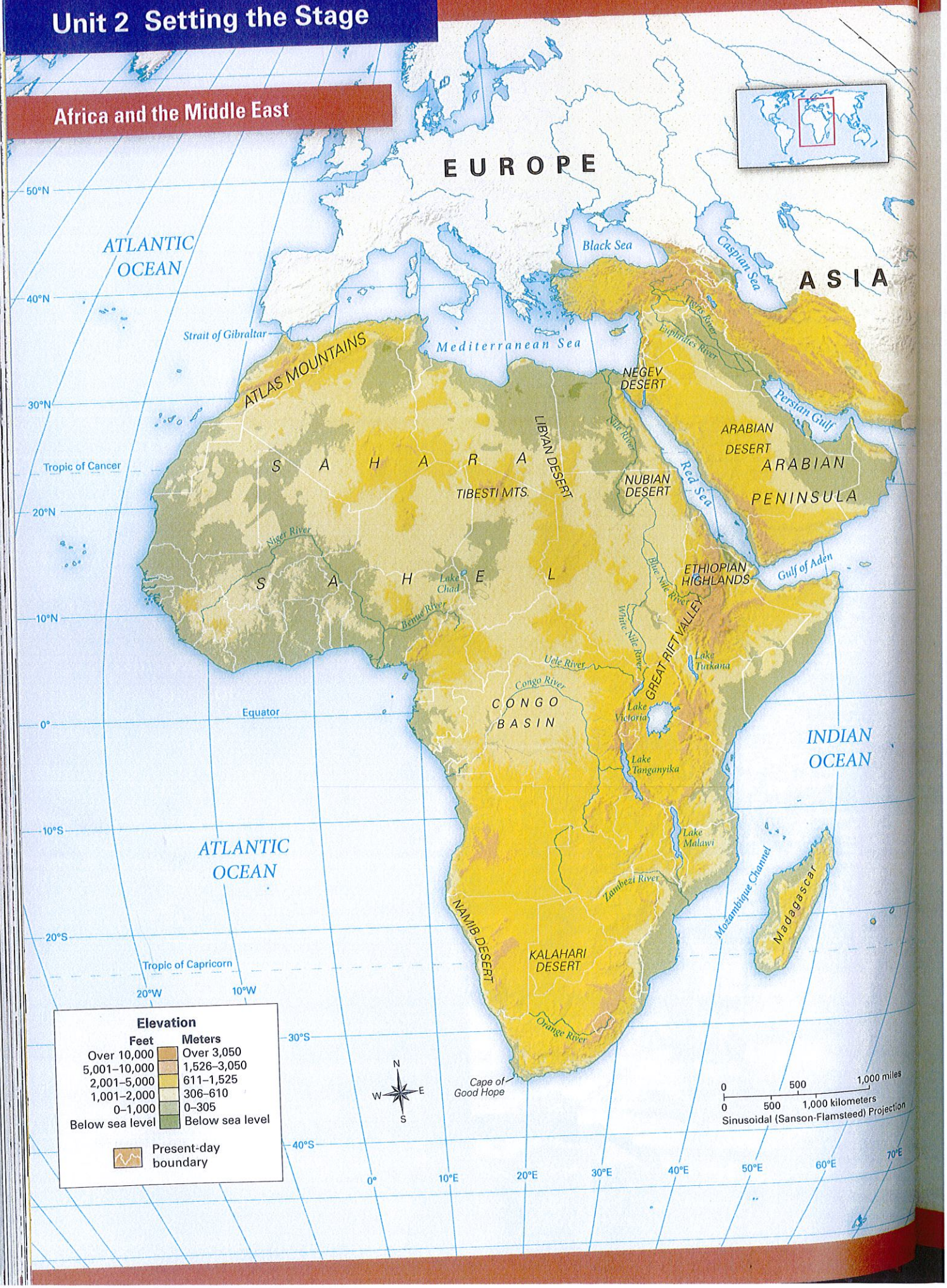
Africa and the Middle East



Ancient Egypt and the Middle East

Can you use one word to describe the geographic setting of an entire region? If that region is North Africa and the Middle East, you can. That one word would be *desert*. Locate both the northern part of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula on the map on the opposite page. Then look at the smaller vegetation map below on this page. The vegetation for most of the region is desert or desert scrub. Few plants grow in the desert. Small trees, bushes, and other plants that have adapted to a dry climate make up desert scrub.

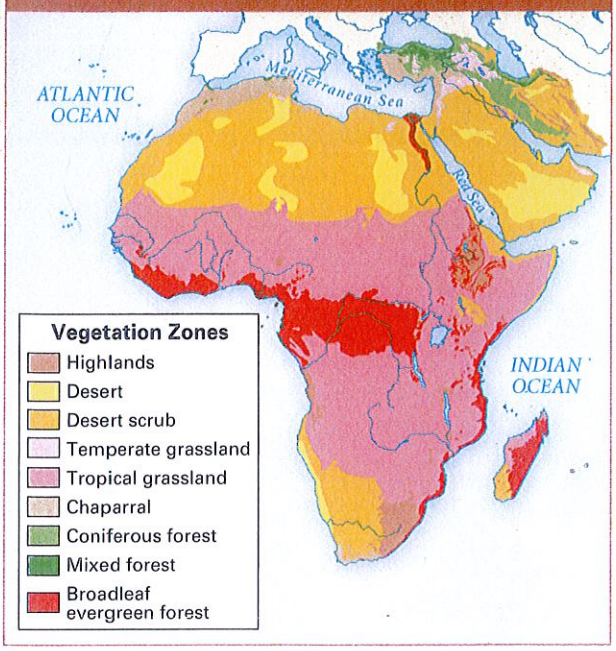
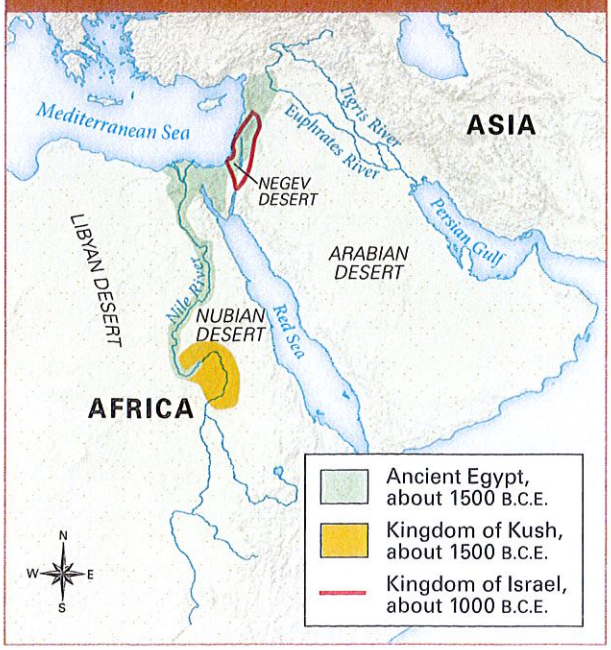
Look again at the vegetation map. Notice the narrow band of broadleaf evergreen forest that extends through Egypt. How can trees that remain green all year grow in such a dry area? The answer is the Nile River. This vegetation zone follows the path of the Nile River in Egypt.

The Nile River has long been an essential source of life-giving water in a dry land. For thousands of years, the Nile flooded the land along its banks, leaving deposits of rich soil in the Nile River valley. The ancient Egyptians grew plentiful harvests of wheat and barley there. These harvests made it possible for the Egyptians to develop one of the world's greatest ancient civilizations.

Two other ancient civilizations developed in this region. Located south of Egypt was the ancient civilization of Kush. Kush developed close ties with Egypt. Northeast of Egypt is an area that borders the Mediterranean Sea. This is the land of ancient Canaan, where the Israelites settled. These people, sometimes called Hebrews, were the ancestors of the Jews. They gave the world one of its major religions–Judaism, and founded the Kingdom of Israel in Canaan.

The mostly dry and hot geographic setting of North Africa and the Middle East was home to three civilizations you will learn about in this unit. First, you will learn more about geography and its effect on where and how these civilizations grew. Then, you will explore each civilization, beginning with the ancient Egyptians.

Vegetation Zones of Africa and the Middle East



Ancient Egypt, Kush, and Israel