

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

President Bush Tours Middle East to Build Support, 01/16/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/jan-june08/bush_1-16.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

Student Worksheet (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. Where is the Middle East? Go to a map and point out which countries you think belong in that categorization.

2. Which countries in the Middle East are strong allies of the United States? Why?

3. Why do you think President Bush might be making a trip to the region?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – **Student Worksheet**

1. What was the purpose of President Bush's most recent overseas trip? Where did he travel?

ANSWER

President Bush visited six Middle East countries in eight days in an attempt to firm up support on key diplomatic issues, including peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians and unified pressure on Iran.

The president travelled to Israel, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He also visited the West Bank, where he met with Palestinian leaders.

2. What did Mr. Bush say during his speech in Israel? What is his opinion of a peace agreement there between Israelis and Palestinians?

ANSWER

During the visit Mr. Bush called on Israel to dismantle "illegal" settlements in disputed lands it has occupied since the Six-Day War in 1967. He also called upon Palestinians to guarantee that no part of their land remain a safe haven for terrorists.

Following his meeting with Palestinian leaders in the West Bank, the president said he was confident that there will be a comprehensive peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians by the end of the year and the end of his term as president.

3. Why does the United States have a special relationship with Kuwait? What did the president do there?

ANSWER

This country is the home of Camp Arfijan – an Army base in the region built with the cooperation and support of the Kuwaiti government. The government has been a strong U.S. supporter since President George H.W. Bush helped free the state from the Iraqis during the first Persian Gulf War in 1991.

While in Kuwait, Mr. Bush visited U.S. troops and their leader in Iraq, General David Petraeus.

4. Why is President Bush concerned about Iran's actions in the region?

ANSWER

Although a recent American intelligence report stated Iran has not been developing nuclear weapons since 2003, President Bush said Iran is a danger to the region and continues to have nuclear ambitions.

The United States is also concerned that Iran, a sworn enemy of Israel, is supporting Islamic militants throughout the region, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

"Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere," the president said. "So the United States is strengthening our longstanding security commitments with our friends in the gulf and rallying friends around the world to confront this danger before it is too late."

5. How did the United States hope to convince Saudi Arabia to help a potential Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement?

ANSWER

As part of a deal to gain more support for the peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis, the administration announced its intent to sell the oil-rich kingdom \$20 billion in weapons.

6. In addition to asking for help with a peace agreement what did the U.S. government ask of Saudi Arabia?

ANSWER

While there he asked the oil-rich states to consider the impact that high oil prices were having on the American economy. Oil recently hit a \$100 a barrel high for the first time.

Conceding that demand is outpacing supply, Mr. Bush asked OPEC, the organization of oil-producing nations, for increased production, the Associated Press reported.

"When consumers have less purchasing power because of high prices of gasoline – in other words, when it affects their families – it could cause the economy to slow down," he said. "I hope that OPEC, if possible, understands that if they could put more supply on the market it would be helpful."

7. What kind of assistance can the United States expect from Egypt, according to the article?

ANSWER

The president finished up his trip in Egypt, where he met with Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

"We are keen on supporting peace efforts," Mubarak said. "We are ready, hand-in-hand with the United States of America," and others to work for the "sake of a comprehensive and just peace, to put an end to this Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to open new horizons for the Middle East for a more peaceful and secure future."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. According to the news article, President Bush travelled to the region to garner support for a comprehensive peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians. Why is this important? Do you think this tactic will improve the chances of an agreement before Mr. Bush leaves office? Why or why not?

2. What is your opinion of President Bush's argument that Iran is still a danger to the greater Middle East region even though a recent American intelligence report states that the country stopped nuclear weapons production in 2003? How likely is it that the greater region will back tougher

sanctions and other pressures on Iran? What would be your diplomatic course of action if you were the president of the United States? Explain your reasoning.

3. Research countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and United Arab Emirates. Look at their political systems, economies, and topics such as free press, women's rights. Does your research affect your opinion about U.S. policy towards these countries? What do you think it should be?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.