

Eastern Europe

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. The physical features of Eastern Europe include wide open plains, rugged mountain ranges, and many rivers.
2. The climate and vegetation of Eastern Europe differ widely in the north and the south.

Key Places

Carpathians a low mountain range stretching from the Alps to the Black Sea area

Balkan Peninsula one of the largest peninsulas in Europe, extends into the Mediterranean

Danube longest river in the region, begins in Germany and flows east across the Great Hungarian Plain

Chernobyl a nuclear power plant in Ukraine

Section Summary

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The landforms of Eastern Europe stretch across the region in broad bands of plains and mountains. The Northern European Plain covers most of northern Europe. The **Carpathians** are south of the plains. These mountains extend from the Alps to the Black Sea area. South of the Carpathians is another large plain, the Great Hungarian Plain, located mostly in Hungary. South of this plain are the Dinaric Alps and Balkan Mountains. These mountain ranges cover most of the **Balkan Peninsula**. The peninsula extends into the Mediterranean.

Eastern Europe has many water bodies that are important routes for transportation and trade. The Adriatic Sea lies to the southwest. The Black Sea is east of the region. The Baltic Sea is in the far north. It remains frozen some part of the year, reducing its usefulness.

The rivers that flow through Eastern Europe are also important for trade and transportation, especially the **Danube**. The Danube crosses nine

Circle three mountain ranges in Eastern Europe.

Why are rivers important to the economy of Eastern Europe?

Section 1, continued

countries before it empties into the Black Sea. This river is very important to Eastern Europe's economy. Many of the region's largest cities are along its banks. Dams on the river provide electricity for the region. This busy river has become very polluted from heavy use.

Why is the Danube so polluted?

CLIMATE AND VEGETATION

Types of climates and vegetation in Eastern Europe vary widely. The shores of the Baltic Sea in the far north have the coldest climate. The area does not get much rain, but is sometimes foggy. Its cold, damp climate allows huge forests to grow.

The interior plains have a much milder climate than the Baltic Region. Winters can be very cold, but summers are mild. The western parts of the interior plains get more rain than the eastern parts. Because of its varied climate, the forests cover much of the north and open grassy plains lie in the south. In 1986 Eastern Europe's forests were damaged by a major nuclear accident at **Chernobyl**. An explosion released huge amounts of radiation into the air that poisoned forests and ruined soil across the region.

Circle the type of climate found in the Balkan Peninsula.

The Balkan coast has a Mediterranean climate with warm summers and mild winters. Some of its beaches attract tourists. The area does not get much rain so there are not many forests. The land is covered by shrubs and trees that do not need much water.

Why is the vegetation of the Balkan Peninsula different from the vegetation of the Baltic Region?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Analyzing Information How has climate affected the vegetation in Eastern Europe? Explain your answer in a brief paragraph.

Eastern Europe

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. History ties Poland and the Baltic Republics together.
2. The cultures of Poland and the Baltic Republics differ in language and religion but share common customs.
3. Economic growth is a major issue in the region today.

Key Terms and Places

infrastructure the set of resources, like roads, airports, and factories that a country needs in order to support economic activities

Warsaw capital of Poland

Section Summary

HISTORY

The groups who settled around the Baltic Sea in ancient times developed into the Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and the Polish. Each group had its own language and culture, but in time they became connected by a shared history. By the Middle Ages, each had formed an independent kingdom. Lithuania and Poland were the largest and strongest. They ruled large parts of Eastern and Northern Europe. Latvia and Estonia were smaller, weaker, and often invaded.

In the 1900s two world wars greatly damaged the Baltic region. In World War I millions died in Poland, and thousands more were killed in the Baltic countries. The region also suffered greatly during World War II. This war began with the invasion of Poland by Germany. While fighting the Germans, troops from the Soviet Union invaded Poland and occupied Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

After World War II ended, the Soviet Union took over much of Eastern Europe, making Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania part of the Soviet Union. The Soviets also forced Poland to accept a Communist

How did the Baltic Republics lose their independence after World War II?

Section 2, continued

government. In 1989 Poland rejected communism and elected new leaders. In 1991 the Baltic Republics broke away from the Soviet Union. They became independent countries again.

Underline the sentences that tell how the governments of the Baltic countries changed after 1989.

CULTURE

The Baltic countries differ from each other in languages and religion, but are alike in other ways. The Latvian and Lithuanian languages are alike, but Estonian is like Finnish, the language spoken in Finland. Polish is more like languages of countries farther south. Most Polish people and Lithuanians are Roman Catholics because their trading partners were from Catholic countries. Latvians and Estonians are Lutherans, because these countries were once ruled by Sweden where most people are Lutherans.

These countries share many customs and practices. They eat similar foods, practice crafts such as ceramics, painting, and embroidery, and enjoy music and dance.

THE REGION TODAY

The economies of Baltic counties grew more slowly than those of Western European nations because the Soviets did not build a decent **infrastructure**. Poland and the Baltic Republics are working hard to rebuild their economies. As a result, cities like **Warsaw** have become major industrial centers. To help their economies grow, many Baltic countries are trying to attract more tourists. Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the rich cultures, historic sites, and cool summer climates attract visitors.

What economic problems did Soviet rule cause for Poland and the Baltic Republics?

What new source of income have the Baltic countries found?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Understanding Effects Imagine that you are a newly elected leader of a Baltic country. Write a speech that tells what you will do to improve the country's economy.

Eastern Europe

Section 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. The histories and cultures of inland Eastern Europe vary from country to country.
2. Most of inland Eastern Europe today has stable governments, strong economies, and influential cities.

Key Terms and Places

Prague capital of the Czech Republic

Kiev present-day city where the Rus built a settlement that eventually became the center of a huge empire

Commonwealth of Independent States CIS, an international alliance that meets to discuss issues such as trade and immigration that affect former Soviet republics

Budapest capital of Hungary

Section Summary

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Inland Eastern Europe consists of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. It is located on the Northern European and Hungarian plains. The area of the Czech Republic and Slovakia was settled by Slavs, people from Asia who moved into Europe by 1000 BC. The area was once made up of many small Slavic kingdoms. In time more powerful countries like Austria conquered these kingdoms. After Austria was defeated in World War I, land was taken away from it to create the nation of Czechoslovakia. In 1993 Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Because the Czech Republic and Slovakia are located in Central Europe, they have long had ties to Western Europe. Many people are Roman Catholic. The architecture of **Prague** and other cities shows Western influences.

In the 900s Magyar people invaded what is now Hungary. The Magyars influenced Hungarian

What group of people settled the area of the Czech Republic and Slovakia?

Circle the country that land was taken from to create Czechoslovakia.

When was Czechoslovakia created and when did it split?

Section 3, continued

culture, especially their language. It developed from the Magyar language.

Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova are more closely tied to Russia than to the West. The Rus people built the settlement that is now **Kiev**. The rulers of Kiev created a huge empire that became part of Russia in the late 1700s. In 1922 Russia became the Soviet Union. Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova became Soviet republics. After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, these countries became independent. Russia has strongly influenced their cultures. Most people are Orthodox Christians and the Ukrainian and Belarusian languages are written in the Cyrillic, or Russian alphabet.

Underline two ways the cultures of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova have been influenced by Russia.

INLAND EASTERN EUROPE TODAY

All inland Eastern European countries were once either part of the Soviet Union or run by Soviet-influenced Communist governments. People had few freedoms. The Soviets did a poor job of managing these economies. Since Soviet ruled ended, all of these countries have become republics, although Belarus is run by a dictator.

How did the government and the economy of the region change after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

Countries of the region belong to international unions. Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova belong to the **Commonwealth of Independent States**. Its members meet to talk about such issues as trade and immigration. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary seek closer ties to the West and belong to the EU. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Ukraine have become prosperous industrial centers.

The capital cities of the region are also economic and cultural centers. Prague, Kiev, and **Budapest** are especially important. They are the most prosperous cities in the region. Many tourists visit these cities.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Evaluating Write a brief essay that explains how the location of inland Eastern Europe has affected its culture and history.

Eastern Europe

Section 4



MAIN IDEAS

1. The history of the Balkan countries is one of conquest and conflict.
2. The cultures of the Balkan countries are shaped by the many ethnic groups who live there.
3. Civil War and weak economies are major challenges to the region today.

Key Terms

ethnic cleansing effort to remove all members of a group from a country or region

Section Summary

HISTORY

The Balkan Peninsula has been ruled by many different groups. In ancient times, the Greeks founded colonies near the Black Sea. This area is now Bulgaria and Romania. Next the Romans conquered most of the area between the Adriatic Sea and the Danube River. When the Roman Empire divided into west and east in AD 300s, the Balkan Peninsula became part of the Byzantine Empire. Under Byzantine rule many people became Orthodox Christians.

Over a thousand years later, Muslim Ottoman Turks conquered the Byzantine Empire. Many people in the Balkans became Muslims. Ottoman rule lasted until the 1800s, when the people of the Balkans drove the Ottomans out. They then created their own kingdoms. In the late 1800s, the Austria-Hungarian Empire took over part of the peninsula. To protest the takeover, a man from Serbia shot the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. This event led to World War I. After the war Europe's leaders combined many formerly independent countries into Yugoslavia. In the 1990s this country broke apart. Ethnic and religious conflict led to its collapse.

Underline the names of groups or empires that ruled the Balkan Peninsula until the 1800s.

Section 4, *continued*

CULTURE

The Balkans are Europe's most diverse region. People practice different religions and speak many different languages. Most people are Christians. They are either Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant. Islam is also practiced. In Albania most people are Muslims. Most people in the Balkans speak languages from one of three language groups. Some speak Slavic languages related to Russian. People in Romania speak Germanic languages and a language that comes from Latin.

What makes the Balkans Europe's most diverse region?

THE BALKANS TODAY

Balkan countries were once run by Communist governments. Poor economic planning has hurt the economies of the region. It is still the poorest region in Europe today. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, many of the countries that had been a part of this country faced violent ethnic and religious conflicts. These conflicts led to **ethnic cleansing** in some areas. In 1995 troops from all over the world came to Bosnia and Herzegovina to help end the fighting.

What caused the violence in the Balkans after Yugoslavia broke apart? What stopped the fighting?

The Balkan region now has eight countries. Five of them were once part of Yugoslavia. Macedonia was the only country to break away peacefully. When Croatia broke away, fighting started between ethnic Croats and Serbs. Peace did not return until many Serbs left Croatia. The two countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro also had terrible ethnic fighting.

The Balkans includes three other countries. Albania and Romania are poor and have serious economic and political problems. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria has built a strong market economy based on industry and tourism.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Predicting Write a paragraph that explains how ethnic diversity could be an advantage for the Balkan countries in the future.