

Countries Around the World™

Jordan

Program Summary

Meet Mohamad. He and his family live in Amman, the capital of Jordan. Join Mohamad as he eats breakfast with his family before heading out on a shopping trip to the *souk* to find just the right spices for his grandmother's *mansaf* — a traditional Jordanian dish made with rice, yogurt and meat. On his way to the market, Mohamad introduces students to some of Jordan's history and heritage when he explores the ruins of a Roman amphitheater and visits the Folklore Museum, which is home to exhibits that feature traditional Palestinian costumes and Arabic musical instruments. Students will learn about Jordan's currency, system of government and religious practices when Mohamad buys spices in the *souk* before attending evening prayers in a mosque. Journey with Mohamad and his family through a narrow canyon to the ancient city of Petra and discover the role of Bedouin nomads in guarding the ruins. Finally, Mohamad travels to visit his grandmother, and when the rest of the family arrives, they all sit down for a meal of grandmother's famous *mansaf*.

Country Information

- **location:** Middle East; bordered by Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the West Bank
- **capital:** Amman
- **official language:** Arabic
- **type of government:** constitutional monarchy
- **total area:** approximately 92,300 sq km
- **climate:** mostly arid desert with a rainy season in the West (November to April)
- **terrain:** mostly desert plateau in the East, highland area in the West; Great Rift Valley separates East and West Banks of the Jordan River
- **bodies of water:** the Dead Sea, Jordan River
- **natural resources:** includes phosphates, potash and shale oil
- **industries:** includes clothing, phosphate mining, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, petroleum refining, cement, potash, inorganic chemicals, light manufacturing and tourism
- **agricultural products:** includes citrus, tomatoes, cucumbers, olives; sheep, poultry, stone fruits, strawberries and dairy

Vocabulary

souk — A traditional market found in many cities of the Arab world. It is usually an outdoor marketplace featuring many separate shops that sell a wide variety of products.

mansaf — A traditional Jordanian dish made with rice, yogurt sauce, meat and spices, and served on a doughy flatbread.

djembe — A goblet-shaped hand drum traditionally covered by an animal skin.

Bedouin — Nomadic Arabs living in the deserts of Northern Africa and the Middle East.

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Jordanian dinar — The currency of Jordan.

dynasty — A line of rulers who passed authority down through generations.

surah — Also "sura." Any of the 114 chapters or sections of the Koran.

Koran — Also "Qur'an." The holy book of Islam.

muezzin — The official who calls Muslims to daily prayer.

minaret — A tall, thin tower connected to a mosque from which people of the Islamic faith are called to prayer.

mosque — A Muslim place of worship.

siq — From the Arabic, meaning "canyon," referring to a long, narrow gorge.

Nabateans — A nomadic tribe that settled in the Naqab desert, northern Arabia and southern Jordan, where it established Petra as its capital.

dromedary — A single-humped camel of Arabia and Northern Africa, often used in the transport of people and goods.

ablution — A washing or cleansing of the body, especially as part of a religious rite.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- In the program, students will see many examples of the importance of family in Jordan. Lead a discussion on families by asking students to brainstorm on the concept of a family. Ask questions, such as: What is a family? Whom do you consider to be a part of your family? Are families always comprised of people to whom you are related? Why is having a family important?
- Distribute maps of the Middle East to the class. Have students locate and label Jordan, its capital and the surrounding countries. Ask students questions, such as: Which countries border Jordan to the north, south, east and west? Which bodies of water are found in Jordan? What do you think the climate is like based on Jordan's location?
- Discuss traveling to different places and experiencing different things. Ask questions, such as: Who has ever taken a trip somewhere? Has anyone ever traveled to a foreign country? Where did you go? What did you do? What were some things that seemed different to you while you were traveling? Then, ask students to generate a list of things that they think will be different about Jordan. As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch to see if any of their assumptions about Jordan were true or not.

Follow-up Activities

- Jordan has ruins from an ancient Roman civilization within its borders, but it's not the only country with them! Have students investigate other places around the world where Roman ruins are still found. Some countries that have ruins include Italy, Turkey, Lebanon, Greece, France and Tunisia. Students can build models of the ruins they discover. Each model should be accompanied by a fact sheet detailing the name of the ruins (if they have one), the country where they are located, the date that the ruins were built, and to any other interesting information about them. Consider watching the program on Italy in this series.
- Just as the stars and stripes on the American flag have meaning, the colors and symbols on the Jordanian flag hold a special meaning to the Jordanian people. Design your own flag for your class/school with symbols and colors that have meaning to you and your classmates. Each flag should be accompanied by an informational caption explaining what the colors and the symbols represent. Display the flags in the classroom.

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- The Bedouin are a group of nomads who can be found in Jordan and several other countries in the Middle East and Africa. Have students collect information about the Bedouin in order to create a classroom display about this group of people. The display can include student-created artifacts and even live models that illustrate how the Bedouin live. Students can write informational placards to go with the artifacts they contribute. As an extension, students can write and illustrate flip books that demonstrate what they have learned. Visit www.readwritethink.org/materials/flipbook/ for an interactive tool students can use to create flip books.
- The *souk* is a lively place where people go to shop and meet people. Working in groups, students pretend that they are merchants planning to set up a stand at a *souk* in Jordan. Based on their observations of the program, have students determine what types of things are sold at a Jordanian *souk*. Students should come up with a name and slogan for their business, what they will sell and a price list featuring prices in both Jordanian dinars and U.S. dollars. Set up a “mini-*souk*” in the classroom with props in place of goods. Students can take turns role playing as vendors and customers.
- What’s in a name? Mohamad, the boy in the program, is named after the prophet who is central to Islam. Have students find out information about the history behind their names and what they mean. Then, students can create banners featuring their names and descriptive captions detailing what they discovered about their names. Display the banners in the classroom.
- Petra is one of the world’s most famous archeological sites that is renowned for its architecture. Show pictures of the ancient city of Petra to students with an eye on the architecture of the various buildings. As a resource, visit the following site: nabataea.net/petra.html. Ask students questions, such as: What architectural details do you notice or find especially appealing? What do you think this building was used for? Students can sketch their favorite structure in the ancient city and write a few sentences describing its function. As an extension, students can consider their own community and sketch a building they consider architecturally appealing.
- Jordan is ruled by the Hashemite dynasty, which traces its lineage back to the second century C.E.! Students can explore the lineage of their own families by creating family trees. For printable forms, visit www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/genlh/forms/. Provide students with an organizing chart to take home to find out about their families. Once completed, students can make simple trees with just their immediate kin or make ones that go back generations. Encourage students to share their lineage with the class.
- Jordan’s long summer peaks during the month of August. During this time, temperatures can get up to 48°C in the Jordan Valley. That’s about 118°F! Have students compare this high temperature to the average high temperature of your community, as well as those of other cities throughout the world. Students can organize their findings into a graph or chart. Do they see any trends? Are there any cities with similar high temperatures? Where are those cities located? Are they similar or different in terms of geography?

Suggested Internet Resources

- news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/828763.stm
Learn more about Jordan’s history, geography, leaders and culture at this up-to-date site by the BBC.
- nabataea.net/petra.html
This site includes historical information about the ancient city of Petra.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Jordan and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the “World Factbook” link.

Suggested Print Resources

- Kummer, Patricia K. *Jordan*. Children’s Press, Danbury, CT; 2006.
- Wills, Karen. *Modern Nations of the World: Jordan*. Lucent Books, Farmington Hills, MI; 2000.

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