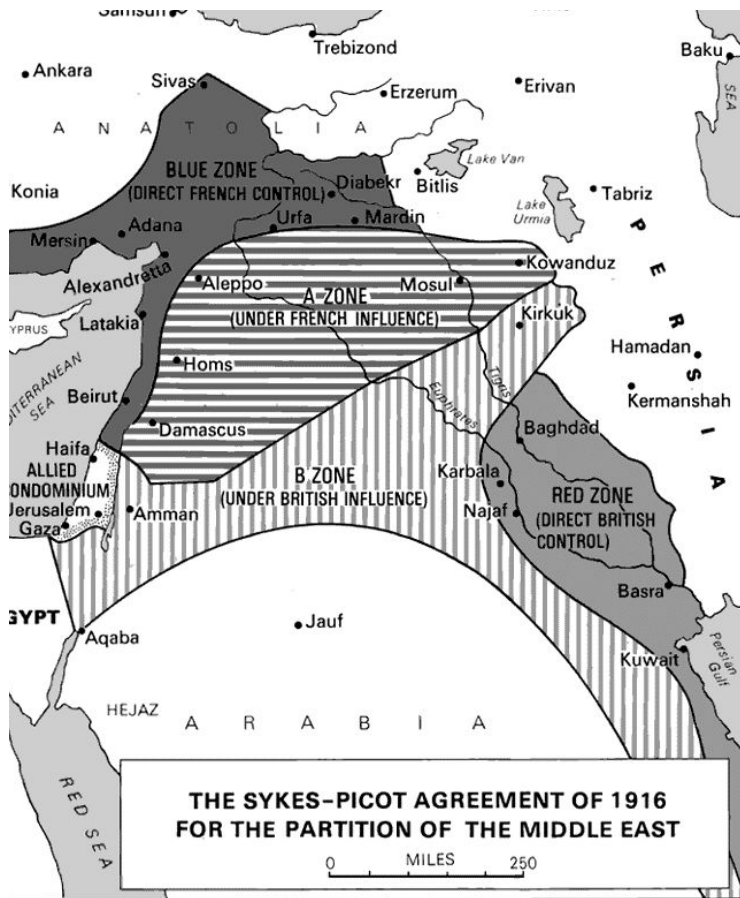


Name: _____ Date: _____

How the Middle East Got that Way

Directions: Read each section carefully, taking notes and answering questions as directed.

Part 1: Introduction



Violence, ethnic clashes, political instability...Have you ever wondered why the Middle East is such a mess? It may be hard to believe, but a lot of it goes back 100 years. In 1916, two men sat down and sketched out lines on a map that basically carved out much of today's unstable Middle East. World War I (1914-18) was still going on, and the Ottoman Empire was about to fall. Diplomats [government officials representing a country abroad] Sir Mark Sykes of Britain and François Georges-Picot of France set the boundaries for modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and much of the land that Israel and the Palestinians are still fighting over. They worked in secret to create an agreement, which was named for them. The agreement mostly ignored the complicated histories and interests of the many ethnic and religious groups who had been living there for centuries. These included the Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

1-What is an "ethnic clash?"

2-Provide an example of an ethnic clash we have discussed in World Cultures:

3-Fill in the chart below, using the reading and the map.

	British	French
Person part of the Sykes-Picot Agreement		
Areas under Direct European Control (Name cities, countries and use cardinal directions when appropriate)	A. B.	A. B.
Areas under European Influence (Name cities, countries and use cardinal directions when appropriate)	A. B.	A. B.

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4-Identify four countries whose boundaries were impacted by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

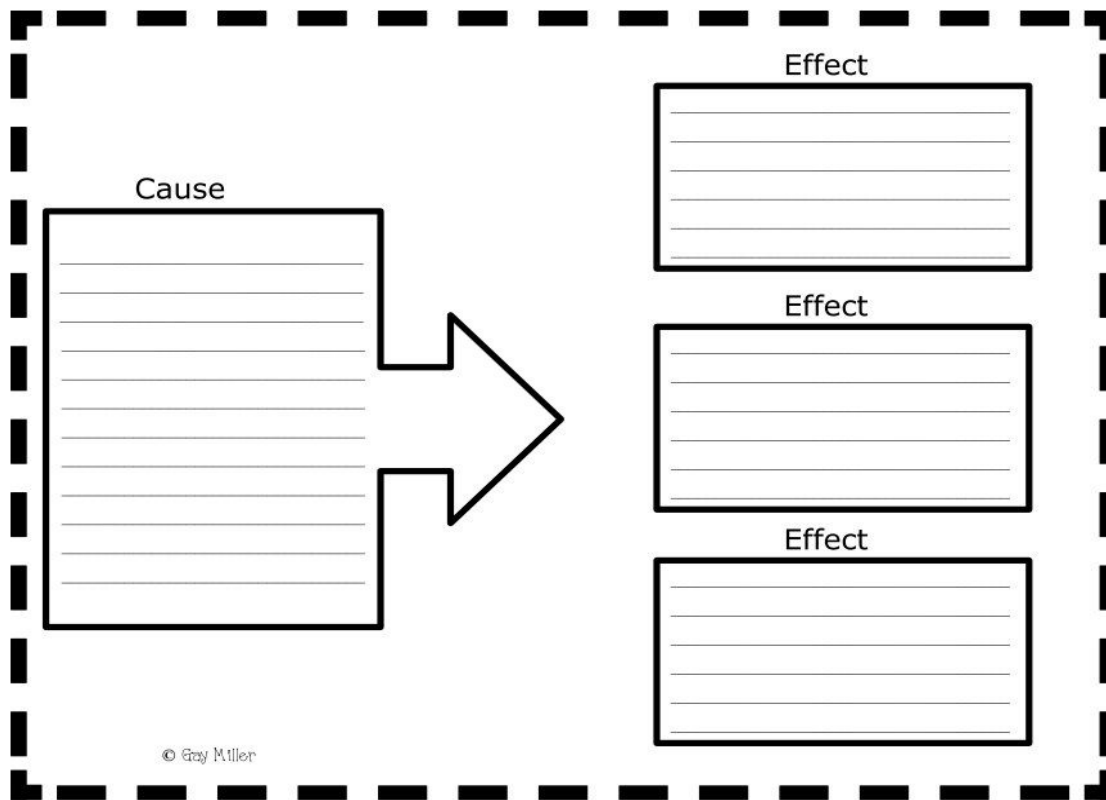
5-Identify five ethnic and religious groups who were impacted by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

“Sykes-Picot is at the root of many of today’s conflicts in the Middle East,” says David L. Phillips, a Middle East expert at Columbia University in New York who has advised the last three presidential administrations. The effects of the borders the two men created can be felt everywhere. Syria is stuck in a civil war that began more than five years ago. It has cost tens of thousands of lives. Iraq is struggling to get rid of the brutal terrorist group ISIS (also known as the Islamic State or ISIL). Since 2014, ISIS has been taking over large areas of territory in Iraq and in Syria.

6-Compare the Sykes-Picot Agreement to the Berlin Conference of 1884. (Use your Africa notes if you need to remember what this was). (What did each of these agreements do? How are they similar?)

7-Fill in the cause-and-effect chart below, with the Sykes-Picot Agreement as the cause.



Part 2: The Ottoman Empire

Beginning in the 16th century, the region now known as the Middle East fell under the control of the Ottoman Empire. This was a large Turkish empire that at its height also controlled much of southeastern Europe and northern Africa. European military victories in the 19th century had already begun eating away at much of the Ottoman territory. But the Turks suffered a final blow during World War I. That's when they made the mistake of joining Germany and Austria-Hungary. This ended up being a losing battle against Britain, France, Russia, and ultimately the U.S. Britain and France were the two major European powers at the time. After the war, they split up the Ottoman Empire's territories, based on the work of Sykes and Picot. The men had met in Paris and London from November 1915 to March 1916. They marked off areas for the British and French to control at the end of the war. Britain and France were mainly focused on advancing their own interests, like tapping the Middle East's newly discovered oil reserves. They ignored the complex ethnic and religious loyalties of the people living there. "The great powers carved up the Middle East into zones of influence, without consultations and without regard to local needs," says Phillips. When the Sykes-Picot agreement was revealed, Arab leaders were angry.

8-Why was it a mistake for the Ottoman Empire to join Austria-Hungary and Germany during WWI? What was an effect of this?

9-What was the number one resource that the Europeans wanted in the Middle East?

They [the Arab leaders] felt betrayed. France and Britain had promised them independent lands in exchange for fighting against their Turkish Ottoman rulers. World powers met after World War I to discuss the fate of the Ottoman territories. President Woodrow Wilson supported independence of these lands in his Fourteen Points. But the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which officially ended the war, as well as other postwar treaties, ultimately upheld the Sykes-Picot agreement.

The League of Nations (the organization that eventually inspired the United Nations) approved “mandates” for Britain and France. This gave them broad powers to influence policy and trade in the former Ottoman territories. “After being promised complete and independent nationhood from Ottoman rule, Arab leaders were told, ‘No, we’re not going to do that for you,’” says Christopher Rose of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. “What we’re going to do is set you up as these ‘mandates,’ and you will get independence at some time in the future.” The British and French argued that they were helping these countries by creating modern, non-religious nation-states. But Shadi Hamid of the Brookings Institution points out that the people who used to live under Ottoman rule didn’t really think of themselves as nations with firm borders. They thought of themselves as tribal and religious groups. “The sense of being a citizen did not exist,” says Hamid. “It was about being a member of a religious community, that’s how you identified.”

10-What caused the Arab leaders to feel betrayed by France and Britain?

11-What would the Arab people not want non-religious [secular] nation-states?

Part 3: Sunnis vs. Shiites (Shia)

Sunni and Shiite (Shia) Muslims, for example, are two distinct groups that have been at odds since 632. That’s when Islam’s founder, Muhammad the prophet, died and disagreement arose over who should replace him. Today, most of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims are Sunni. Shiites are the majority in only Iran and Iraq. Putting rival ethnicities together into newly formed nations soon led to power struggles. Many are unresolved today. Here’s how the events unfolded.

12-What caused the original conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims?

Part 4: IRAQ

The clashing Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish* tribes that the Sykes-Picot agreement forced together were mostly ruled by a series of autocratic [rulers with absolute power] dictators and kings. Among them was dictator Saddam Hussein, who came to power in 1979. In 2003, he was overthrown by an American-led group. The group claimed he hid weapons of mass destruction. (No such weapons were ever found.) Old ethnic rivalries soon resurfaced. Americans tried to establish a coalition [temporary alliance] government of Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. But Shiites ultimately took over. That led some Sunnis to form a group that eventually joined with radicals in Syria to create ISIS. The goal of the Sunni Muslim terrorist group is to get rid of Shiite Muslims, Kurds, and Westerners and start its own brand of radical Islam in the Middle East. ISIS has been remarkably successful at recruiting terrorists online from around the world, including the U.S. In December 2015, a married couple inspired by ISIS killed 14 people at an office party in San Bernardino, California.

13-Now, fill in the timeline of events in Iraq following the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Make sure to include events (including who was involved and what happened) in 1979, 2003, and 2015.

Date _____

Timeline Title:

14-What is the goal of ISIS?

Part 5: SYRIA

Even though most of the people living in this region were Sunni, French powers installed Western-friendly leaders from the Alawite sect of Shiite Islam. In 1971, Hafez al-Assad became president. He kept the country united, often through brutal control. In 2000, he was succeeded [took over a throne] by his son, Bashar al-Assad. He is Syria's current president. After the Arab Spring, a wave of democratic protests that rocked the Middle East beginning in 2010, civil war broke out in Syria. So far, it has cost more than 250,000 lives. It has also allowed ISIS to conquer some Syrian territory. Several Sunni rebel groups are fighting to overthrow Assad. Powers like the U.S. and Russia have been offering military help. (The U.S. has supported moderate rebels. Russia has supported Assad.) Meanwhile, millions of desperate refugees have been fleeing both Syria and Iraq. They've also been posing a huge immigration problem for their neighbors and for Europe.

15-Fill out the cause-and-effect chart below with the Syrian Civil War as the cause.

Cause

© Gay Miller

Effect

Effect

Effect

Use the political cartoon to answer the questions that follow.

16-Who and what do you see in the political cartoon?

17-What is the MAIN idea of the political cartoon

18-Describe the author's POV in 1-2 sentences. (How well does the author think President Obama is dealing with ISIS?)

Source: "C'Mon! Do Something," Tim Eagan, 2014.

Part 6: 'THE PALESTINE MANDATE'

The British mandate over Palestine included present-day Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank and Gaza. At the time, the majority of the population living there was Arab. Most Arabs opposed the Zionist movement, which called for a Jewish state in Palestine.

19-Why were most Arabs against the Zionist movement? (How would that movement impact them personally?)

6

20-What Declaration is the Zionist movement related to? (Check your notes, if necessary).

But world pressure to create a Jewish homeland increased after World War II (1939-45). That's because 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. In 1947, Britain, with approval from the United Nations, came up with a partition [split] plan. It would create the nations of Israel and Palestine. The Jews accepted the plan. But the Palestinians and surrounding Arab countries rejected it.

21-What event caused the creation of modern-day Israel?

22-Who/what created modern-day Israel?

They [The Palestinians and Arabs] fought an unsuccessful war against the newly declared state of Israel in May 1948. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel expanded territory under its control by capturing lands where many Palestinians were living. For decades, Israel and the Palestinians have been locked in a conflict that sometimes explodes into violence. At least nine American presidents have tried to broker a peace agreement. The occupied Palestinians continue to demand a state of their own. One hundred years after Sykes-Picot, not all experts agree that it is to blame for the Middle East's troubles. Robert Danin, of the Council on Foreign Relations, notes that many nations with random boundaries in other regions of the world have managed to live in relative peace.

23-Which country has attempted to help facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement?

Part 7: Learning From the Past?

Still, many experts and Arab nations see Sykes-Picot as the starting point for a lot of the region's problems today. Rose, of the University of Texas at Austin, says that as the U.S. and other world powers struggle to figure out how to best handle crises like the Syrian civil war, the mistakes colonial powers made in 1916 should serve as a lesson. "We can't have a peace conference where the world powers sit down and say, 'Hey, here's how we're going to solve your problems,'" says Rose. "We can help, we can aid, we can partner, we can support, but Syrians have to be a key player in however the settlement is worked out."

24-What is a lesson to be learned from the Sykes-Picot Agreement (in your own words)?

Source: Joseph Berger, "How the Middle East Got That Way," *Upfront*, April 25, 2016.