

**Our
Great
Big
World**

Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy



**Dedicated to
Clara, Wesley, Peter, Thomas, and Patrick.
And to Colleen Joy,
who arrived in our great big world
while I was writing it. –MEM**

Our Great Big World
by Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy

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Table of Contents

Dear Parents and Students	i
Author's Thanks	ii
How to Use <i>Our Great Big World</i>	iii

From Top to Bottom

Unit 1	1
Lesson 1 - Our Great Big World	2
Lesson 2 - The Arctic	6
Lesson 3 - Antarctica	10

Middle East

Unit 2	15
Lesson 4 - Welcome to the Middle East!	16
Lesson 5 - The Dead Sea Scrolls	20
Lesson 6 - The Grand Bazaar	24
Unit 3	29
Lesson 7 - Camels	30
Lesson 8 - Pearl Diving	34
Lesson 9 - The Falcon Souq	38
Unit 4	43
Lesson 10 - Saving Books	44
Lesson 11 - Oil	48
Lesson 12 - The Burj Khalifa	52

Africa

Unit 5	57
Lesson 13 - Welcome to Africa!	58
Lesson 14 - The Sahara Desert	62
Lesson 15 - The Pyramids of Giza	66
Unit 6	71
Lesson 16 - Medhi's Faith	72
Lesson 17 - Trash and Recycling	76
Lesson 18 - Tiébélé	80
Unit 7	85
Lesson 19 - Jungle Hospital	86
Lesson 20 - Hope for South Sudan ..	90
Lesson 21 - The Great Migration	94
Unit 8	99
Lesson 22 - Transformation in Twashuka	100
Lesson 23 - Chacma Baboons	104
Lesson 24 - Baobab Trees	108

Europe

Unit 9	113
Lesson 25 - Welcome to Europe!....	114
Lesson 26 - Cork.....	118
Lesson 27 - Belém Tower	122
Unit 10	127
Lesson 28 - Berti and His Radio	128
Lesson 29 - Santorini Caldera.....	132
Lesson 30 - Leaning Tower of Pisa .	136
Unit 11	141
Lesson 31 - Alabaster Coast.....	142
Lesson 32 - Dikes and Windmills ..	146
Lesson 33 - Burg Eltz.....	150
Unit 12	155
Lesson 34 - Puffling Patrol.....	156
Lesson 35 - Giant's Causeway.....	160
Lesson 36 - Big Ben.....	164
Unit 13	169
Lesson 37 - Lithuanian Crosses.....	170
Lesson 38 - Norwegian Fjords	174
Lesson 39 - Reindeer Farm	178
Unit 14	183
Lesson 40 - A Czech Dress.....	184
Lesson 41 - Pysanky Eggs	188
Lesson 42 - Polish Gingerbread.....	192
Unit 15	197
Lesson 43 - Russian Explorers.....	198
Lesson 44 - Matryoshka Dolls	202
Lesson 45 - St. Basil's Cathedral....	206

Asia

Unit 16	211
Lesson 46 - Welcome to Asia!	212
Lesson 47 - Hormuz Island.....	216
Lesson 48 - Buzkashi	220
Unit 17	225
Lesson 49 - Gyalsang of Nepal.....	226
Lesson 50 - Elephants in India.....	230
Lesson 51 - Tea Garden People	234
Unit 18	239
Lesson 52 - Korean Alphabet.....	240
Lesson 53 - Mongolian Yurts	244
Lesson 54 - Himeji Castle.....	248
Unit 19	253
Lesson 55 - God's Songwriter	254
Lesson 56 - Panda Diplomacy.....	258
Lesson 57 - The Great Wall	262
Unit 20	267
Lesson 58 - A Long Lost Cave	268
Lesson 59 - Floating Villages	272
Lesson 60 - The Grand Palace.....	276

Oceania

Unit 21	281
Lesson 61 - Welcome to Oceania! ..	282
Lesson 62 - Animals of Australia....	286
Lesson 63 - Sheep Farming.....	290

Unit 22	295
Lesson 64 - Rugby in Fiji.....	296
Lesson 65 - 800 Languages	300
Lesson 66 - Papa Tom.....	304

North America

Unit 23	309
Lesson 67 - Welcome to North America!.....	310
Lesson 68 - Gathering of Nations...	314
Lesson 69 - Arctic Circle Trail.....	318
Unit 24	323
Lesson 70 - Polar Bear Capital	324
Lesson 71 - America's Famous Statue	328
Lesson 72 - Bermuda	332

Mexico and Central America

Unit 25	337
Lesson 73 - Welcome to Mexico and Central America!..	338
Lesson 74 - Monarch Migration	342
Lesson 75 - Belize's Tallest Building..	346
Unit 26	351
Lesson 76 - Finding Jesus.....	352
Lesson 77 - Semuc Champey.....	356
Lesson 78 - Farming in Honduras..	360

Caribbean

Unit 27	365
Lesson 79 - Welcome to the Caribbean!.....	366
Lesson 80 - Houses of Haiti.....	370
Lesson 81 - King Sugar.....	374

South America

Unit 28	379
Lesson 82 - Welcome to South America!.....	380
Lesson 83 - Amazon Rainforest	384
Lesson 84 - Cable Cars in Rio	388
Unit 29.....	393
Lesson 85 - Angel Falls.....	394
Lesson 86 - Galapagos Islands	398
Lesson 87 - Andean Bears.....	402
Unit 30.....	407
Lesson 88 - Salar de Uyuni.....	408
Lesson 89 - Trapped in Chile.....	412
Lesson 90 - What Now?	416
Sources	421
Image Credits	424
Index.....	433

Dear Parents and Students,

Our great big world gives us a glimpse of the power and majesty of our God. The skies are big, but God is bigger. The mountains are high, but God's goodness is higher. The oceans are great, but God's love is greater.

I have been blessed to communicate with many people around the world who have shared with me about their lives so that I could share their lives with you through the pages of this book. I have spent years compiling the stories, folktales, and the songs in this curriculum. I pray that it is a blessing to you.

As you open these pages, keep opening your heart to the God who created this great big world, Who loves you and has a beautiful plan for your part in it.

Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy
Cookeville, Tennessee
June 2024



Author's Thanks

I could not have written this alone! I appreciate my husband, Nate, for heartily supporting my efforts and for creating the maps that are part of this curriculum.

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And, most importantly, I appreciate our Father in heaven for creating this great big world for us to explore. To You belong all the glory and praise.

—*Mary Evelyn*

How to Use Our Great Big World

Our Great Big World is a one-year world geography course designed for students in grades one through four. The curriculum has 30 units with three lessons each. I recommend completing one unit per week.

The lessons are grouped by continent, plus a few additional regions. The curriculum begins by exploring the North Pole and the South Pole. Lessons then explore the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and Oceania, North America, Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Our Great Big World is much more than geography. As you go through the curriculum, your students will also be learning history, literature, music, and art. You can simplify your school year by making *Our Great Big World* the centerpiece of your children's learning this year.

How Does This Curriculum Work?

This book provides all of the instructions for what to do each day, so you don't need a separate Teacher's Guide. Parents can read the lessons aloud or students can read the lessons alone. I encourage you to enjoy looking closely at the pictures and talking about them.

Each lesson in this curriculum stands alone. When you begin studying a new continent or region, you will read one lesson about the whole region first, including three special foods from that part of the world. After that, each lesson will focus on one particular person, place, or subject within that region.

Each unit has three lessons. At the end of each lesson is an Activities Ideas box. Don't think of these as a checklist that you must complete. Look at these as ideas to enhance your study. Let your student's grade, age, abilities, needs, and interests be your guide as you select activities. The activities should challenge your student, but he or she should also feel competent and successful.

In the Activity Ideas box you will find instructions for:

- Finding a particular place on a globe.
- *Our Great Big World Atlas Workbook*
- *Our Great Big World Lesson Review*
- *Our Great Big World Coloring Book*
- *Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*
- Creative Writing
- Family Activities
- Literature

Map and Globe

A map of the continents is on the inside of the back cover of this book. In the first lesson about each continent or major region, your student will see the continent or region name in **bold red type**. Your student should find that continent or region on the map of the continents.

Since understanding our three-dimensional planet on a two-dimensional map is difficult for young children, I highly recommend that you purchase a globe that shows all the countries of the world. In lessons about specific countries, your student will see the name of the country in **red**. In the Activity Ideas box at the end of those lessons, I suggest finding the specific countries on a globe. Finding locations on the map at the end of the book *and* on a globe will help your child gain a better grasp of where things are in our great big world.



Atlas Workbook

After you have enjoyed a lesson, your child will be ready to complete the corresponding page in the *Atlas Workbook*. This resource is optional, but if your child is ready for it, I strongly encourage you to use it. Your student will learn a great deal about our great big world through these activities.

Each student should have his or her own personal *Atlas Workbook*. I recommend using pencils and high-quality colored pencils—and always having a sharpener handy!

Lesson Review

The *Lesson Review* has five questions about each lesson. This book is designed primarily for older students studying this course. You can have your child answer these on his own by writing directly in the book, you can read the questions aloud and have him answer orally, or you can skip them all together. It is completely up to you. You know the best way for your child to retain and enjoy the material.



Coloring Book

After you have enjoyed a lesson, your child will be ready to complete the corresponding page in the *Coloring Book*. We designed each page to review something from the lesson. Coloring is a great way to reinforce concepts visually. It requires children to focus on details and think about the subject they are coloring.



In developing these books, I had younger students in mind for the *Coloring Book* and older students in mind for the *Atlas Workbook*. However, many children will benefit from doing both! You know how to make the best choices for your children.

The *Coloring Book* is a great way to occupy children while they listen to you read the literature aloud. If you have a child who is not yet in first grade, you can purchase a *Coloring Book* to include her in your family's study and keep her little hands busy, too!

Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World



This book is an exciting collection of folktales and songs from around the world. One folktale and one song correspond with each unit. Some of the folktales are taken directly from old folktale collections that are in the public domain. Others I retold based on traditional tales. You may like to read the folktales aloud to your child, but you will also find recordings of all the folktales at notgrass.com/FSOGBW. If you listen to the recordings, your child can read along in the book and look at the illustrations. Be sure to read the introduction to each selection in the book before you listen to the recording.

I am excited for you to hear the songs in this collection. People in several countries around the world recorded songs specifically for this project. Two even composed original songs. The audio quality on a few of the tracks is not professional, but the authenticity definitely makes up for it. When you come to a song, visit notgrass.com/FSOGBW (or scan this QR code and save the link on your phone).



Creative Writing Notebook

If you plan on your child completing the creative writing ideas, I suggest you give your child a notebook specifically for that purpose. Each unit contains one creative writing idea. If your child is not ready for creative writing, you can simply discuss the ideas presented in the prompts. You could also have your child draw a picture that illustrates his or her thoughts. Another idea is for your child to dictate his or her thoughts while you write them down in the notebook.

If you would like to incorporate handwriting practice, you could have your students write the names of the featured countries in a notebook. Students of any age would benefit from copying the Bible verse at the end of each lesson.

Family Activities

Each unit includes one Family Activity that is connected with one of the lessons in that unit. These activities include crafts, recipes, games, and other special projects. The instructions are on the last page of each unit. I recommend that you read the instructions and gather the supplies ahead of time. You can find a list of all the supplies you will need to complete these activities at notgrass.com/OGBWlinks. You can complete the activity on the day it is assigned or on another day that is convenient. I encourage you to let these be fun activities for your whole family.

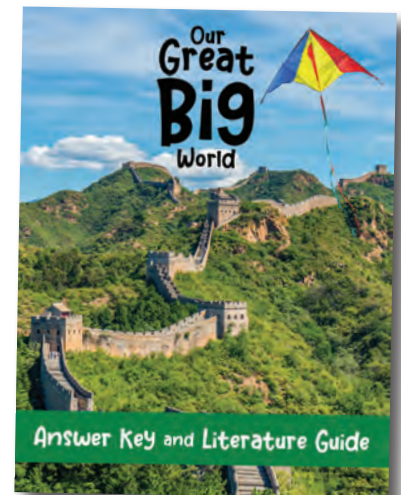
Like all components of *Our Great Big World*, the Family Activities are optional. We offer them as extra learning experiences, but do not feel obligated to do them if they do not suit your family's needs or schedule.

Parental Supervision

Please review the Family Activities and discuss with your child what he or she may do alone and what activities need your supervision. The activities include the use of scissors, knives, the oven, the microwave, and the stovetop. Some children may be allergic to recipe ingredients or craft supplies. Notgrass History cannot accept responsibility for the safety of your child in completing these activities. Thank you for being a conscientious parent who takes responsibility for your child's safety.

Answer Key and Literature Guide

This booklet for parents contains answers for the review questions in the *Lesson Review* and for the few activities in the *Atlas Workbook* that need an answer key. It also includes a guide for the literature titles. This guide lets you know about topics and words you might want to be aware of before you hand the books to your child to read. If you read the books aloud, you can always skip over the handful of words or phrases that you might not want them to hear.



Literature

Seven suggested literature titles complement the lessons in *Our Great Big World*. Each book corresponds to one of the regions in the curriculum. All of the titles are in print and available from Notgrass History.

You can read these titles aloud with your student, which is a fun and memorable way to spend time together. Or you can have your child read the books independently. You might decide to do a combination, depending on your family's schedule.

Each chapter in each literature title is assigned in the Activity Ideas box at the end of the lessons. These assignments are merely a suggested guide to help you finish the book while you are studying the corresponding region. You might prefer to read that region's book over a single weekend or on a road trip, but we do recommend you read it while you are studying the corresponding region. Some lessons do not have literature assignments when a region has more lessons than there are chapters in the corresponding book.

Each book offers an enjoyable way to learn more about a region, but if reading the literature adds too much pressure to your homeschool schedule, feel free to skip some or all of them.

The books give children a feel for life around the world during modern times or at least fairly recent history. *The Muddleheaded Wombat* is not about real life, but it is a timeless tale of talking animals that is popular with children in Australia.

- *The Turtle of Oman* by Naomi Shihab Nye
- *Akimbo of Africa* by Alexander McCall Smith
- *A Bear Called Paddington* by Michael Bond
- *Race for the Record* by Dave and Neta Jackson
- *The Muddleheaded Wombat* by Ruth Park
- *Owls in the Family* by Farley Mowat
- *Juana and Lucas* by Juana Medina

How Much Time Will Each Lesson Take?

You can read each lesson aloud in about 15 minutes. Answering the questions in the *Lesson Review* will only take a few minutes. The time it takes for a student to complete the *Atlas Workbook* will vary depending on the activity for that day and on each particular child. Many of the activities will take less than 10 minutes, while others will take a bit longer.

Reading the literature will add some time, as will the creative writing and the *Coloring Book*, if you choose to include those in your study. If you do all of the suggested activities, you should plan on an hour to an hour and a half per lesson on average (not including the Family Activities, which will require additional time). You might like to read one lesson each day for three days and complete other suggested activities on other days in your school week.

What Supplies Will My Student Need?

Students will need a pencil and colored pencils. You will need a smartphone, tablet, or computer to listen to the audio recordings of the folktales and songs. Most Family Activities require additional supplies. Remember you can access a complete supply list at notgrass.com/OGBWlinks. The individual Family Activity instruction pages at the end of the units also list supplies needed.

How Many Activities Should My Student Complete?

You know best what your student is capable of accomplishing. Some students will benefit most from completing all of the activity ideas. Others will do better completing only some of them. The variety of activities make it easy for your student to have a positive, rich, and engaging learning experience. Do not feel pressure to complete every assignment! We like to offer a variety of learning activities to meet the needs of a wide range of ages and learning styles.

Helping Struggling Students

For students who struggle with reading or writing, feel free to make adjustments to help them be successful and not become frustrated. You or an older sibling can read the lessons and literature aloud while your student reads along and looks at the rich illustrations. Struggling students might also benefit from reading aloud to you. They can orally complete creative writing activities and review questions.

Using Our Great Big World with Multiple Ages

Our Great Big World is especially designed for first through fourth graders, but other ages can certainly benefit. Younger siblings can listen in on the lessons and literature, look at the pictures, and take part in the Family Activities. If you have a student who has already completed fourth grade, but you want to keep all your children learning together, you might consider giving your older student some additional assignments. They could copy the Bible verses at the end of the lessons, write book reports about the literature titles, research and write reports about some of the places or topics presented in the lessons, make models of some of the featured structures, create travel commercials, or complete other creative activities. You can assign each child different activities, depending on his or her age, interests, and skill level.

Optional Supplemental Resources

This curriculum contains plenty of information for a rich learning experience. You do not need to supplement with anything extra. However, if you are looking for recommended videos, virtual field trips, and interactive websites, check out the suggested links available for each lesson at Homeschool History. Visit notgrass.com/OGBWlinks or scan the QR code.



Respect for All

We at Notgrass History make every effort to write about all people in an honoring and respectful way. We realize that people have different views and preferences when it comes to describing particular groups. We believe that God has created all people in His own image and that they all have equal value in His sight. We have prayerfully sought to use words that honor and respect everyone.

Encouragement for the Journey

Remember that God designed your family and the daily responsibilities you carry. A homeschooling mother who has one child can complete more activities than a homeschooling mother who has seven children and an elderly grandparent living in her home. God will use the efforts of both of these mothers. God does not expect you to do more than you can do. Be kind to yourself. He knows exactly what you and your children need this year. We encourage you to pray about how your family can make the most of *Our Great Big World*. Let it be a tool to help you have a wonderful learning experience with your children.

Remember that out of all the parents in the world to whom God could have given your children, He chose you. He is the one who put your family together. He knows what He is doing. Trust in His choice. God created you. He created your children. Relax and remember that this is the day that the Lord has made. Rejoice and be glad in it!

We at Notgrass History are here to help you. If you have questions or simply need some encouragement, send us an email (help@notgrass.com), call us at 1-800-211-8793, or send a text to 833-236-9631. Thank you for homeschooling your children.

**Our
Great
Big
World**

Unit 1

From Top to Bottom



Lesson 1

Our Great Big World



In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth. That's where we live! God made our great big world a long time ago, but He has been lovingly taking care of it ever since.

God created mountains and hills, valleys and plains. He created rocks and dirt, ice and volcanoes. God created the plants that grow out of the ground. He created every bird that has ever flown in the sky, every fish in the sea, every animal on land, and every human being that has ever lived in the history of our great big world. He is an amazing God.

Elephants in Kenya near Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania





Hunters with golden eagles in Mongolia

When God made this great big world, all the land belonged to Him. It still does. At first all people spoke the same language and lived in the same part of the world. God later decided to have them speak different languages. Families who spoke the same language formed clans and tribes. They moved to different parts of the world and began to claim the land where they lived as their own. Eventually, people set up governments and formed countries.



Peru



Greece



Uganda

Today the land on the earth is divided into about 200 different countries, but the whole earth still belongs to God. Over eight billion people live on our great big world. God created and loves each one of them. He wants every person to know Him.



One of the people God created on this earth is you! You are wonderful, amazing, and special. God made you and He decided that you would live right where you live right now.

You already know a lot about where you live. You know about the world outside your front door. You know what the rocks and dirt are like. You know about the trees that grow near your house. Maybe you have climbed some of them. You have seen some of the birds and animals that live in the same part of the world as you do. You have felt how cold it gets in the winter. You know how hot it gets in the summer.

You know a lot about your town. Think about some of the buildings there. What do they look like on the outside? What are they like on the inside? You have met many of the people who live in your town. Think about some of the people you know in your neighborhood or church.

Maybe you have lived in more than one place. You know a lot about the place or places you have called home.

Minnesota, U.S.



Kids all over the world know what the world is like right where they live, but it's good to know what the world is like in other places, too. Knowing more about other places God made helps us know more about Him. Looking at the amazing things He has made helps us see His creativity and His power. We can also see His creativity and power when we look at the amazing things that people He created have made. When we know more about other places, we will be better able to understand and appreciate and love the people who live there.

As you read the lessons in this book, you will learn about beautiful places in this great big world. You will see pictures of amazing buildings and fun animals in different countries. You will read stories about people from the past and people from today who have made life better for others.

Enjoy your journey around our great big world!

**The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains,
the world, and those who dwell in it.**

Psalm 24:1



Zambia



China



France

Activity Ideas

- You will need a globe to complete many of the activities in *Our Great Big World*. If you do not own a globe, now is a great time to purchase one! Find the country where you live on your globe.
- Complete “Lesson 1: My Home in Our Great Big World” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 1 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 1 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Read the introduction to “This is My Father’s World” (*Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*, page 1) and listen to Track 1 at notgrass.com/FSOGBW.
- In your creative writing notebook, write a description of one of your favorite places in our great big world.

Lesson 2

The Arctic

The North Pole is at the very tip top of our great big world. It is the place that is as far north as anyone can go on earth. The North Pole isn't named after a pole sticking out of the ground. In fact, the North Pole isn't on solid ground at all. It is in the Arctic Ocean. During the summer, some people visit the North Pole on ships. During the winter, sea ice forms over the North Pole. This makes it possible to reach the North Pole on skis or on foot. If you ever want to try it, just remember that a North Pole stroll is going to be cold! (Can you say "Cold North Pole Stroll" ten times fast?)

Visitors to the North Pole



The **Arctic Circle** is an imaginary line that mapmakers place around the top of the earth. That imaginary line is about 1,600 miles from the North Pole. The region above that imaginary line is called the Arctic. The Arctic Ocean covers most of the Arctic region, but the countries of Canada, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, and the United States are all partially in the Arctic. Greenland, which belongs to the country of Denmark, lies mostly in the Arctic Circle. Even though the winters are long and very cold, around four million people live in the Arctic. They live in small villages and large towns, such as the ones below, with houses, shops, restaurants, and airports.



Ittoqqortoormiit, Greenland



Kiruna, Sweden



Murmansk, Russia



Tromsø, Norway



Sea ice in Norway

God designed animals that can survive the harsh weather of the Arctic. As the weather in the Arctic changes, the fur of some Arctic animals changes right along with it. For example, Arctic foxes and Arctic hares have brownish-gray fur in the summertime so that they can hide among rocks and bushes. In the winter, their fur turns white so that they can hide in the snow. As you can see in the photos below, when their fur is in the middle of changing, the animals look pretty funny!



Arctic foxes and Arctic hares at different times of the year

Polar bears roam throughout the Arctic region. At times they live on land, but their favorite place to be is on drifting sea ice. It is the perfect place to raise their babies and the perfect place to hunt for seals—their favorite meal. Polar bears are great swimmers, and they don't mind that the water is icy cold. God gave polar bears thick fur and a super thick layer of blubber under their fur. Blubber is fat. On an adult polar bear, this layer of fat is four inches thick. That is some seriously good insulation!

The Bible teaches us that God has power over His creation. He controls the weather and the temperature around the world, at the top, at the bottom, and everywhere in between.

**He gives snow like wool:
He scatters the frost like ashes.
He casts forth His ice as fragments:
who can stand before His cold?
He sends forth His word and melts them:
He causes His wind to blow
and the waters to flow.
Psalm 147:16–18**



Polar bear in the Arctic

Activity Ideas

- Find the **Arctic Circle** on your globe.
- Complete “Lesson 2: The Arctic Circle” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 2 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 2 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Read the introduction to “The Old Woman and Her Bear” (*Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*, page 2) and listen to Track 2 at notgrass.com/FSOGBW.

Lesson 3

Antarctica

Our great big world has seven continents. They are North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica.

If the North Pole is at the very top of our great big world, can you guess what is at the very bottom? The South Pole! The North Pole is in the Arctic Ocean, but the South Pole is on the continent of Antarctica. Antarctica is very cold and very dry. Antarctica has one of the driest deserts in the world. A desert is a place that receives very little rain or snow. We usually think of deserts as being hot and sandy, but a desert can be cold, too. No rain ever falls on the Antarctic desert, and only a couple of inches of snow falls there each year. Find **Antarctica** on the map at the back of this book.



Six of earth's continents have people who live there all the time. Antarctica is different. Tourists go there for a few days. Scientists and researchers go to Antarctica and stay for a few weeks or a few months, but then they go back home. No one lives there permanently. Antarctica has no president or king. Instead, several countries around the world have agreed upon an Antarctic Treaty System. These countries make decisions about what may and may not happen on the continent.

Argentina, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, the United States, Russia, and other countries operate about 70 research stations in Antarctica. In 1983 researchers at Russia's station in Vostok, Antarctica, recorded the coldest temperature ever measured on earth: minus 128.6 degrees Fahrenheit. That's cold!

The United States operates McMurdo Station, which is the largest station in Antarctica. Up to 1,250 people can live and work there at one time. In addition to scientists and researchers, McMurdo also needs other people to help operate the station. It needs carpenters, mechanics, writers, electricians, firefighters, welders, store clerks, cooks, doctors, pilots, engineers, and artists. The people arrive by ship, by plane, and by helicopter. If you were going to work at McMurdo Station, which job would you like to have?



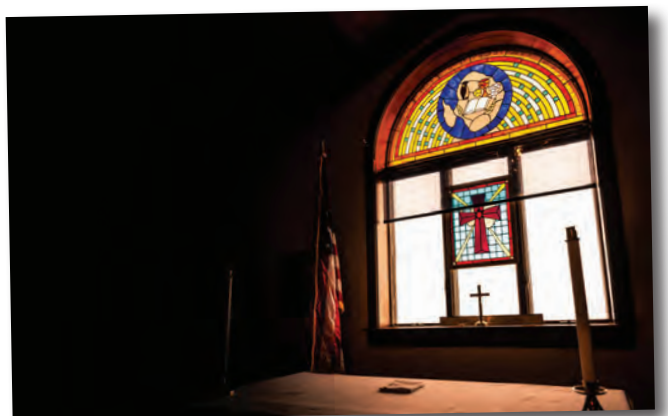
Chinstrap penguins



Landing at McMurdo Station



McMurdo Station



Chapel inside McMurdo Station



Humpback whale

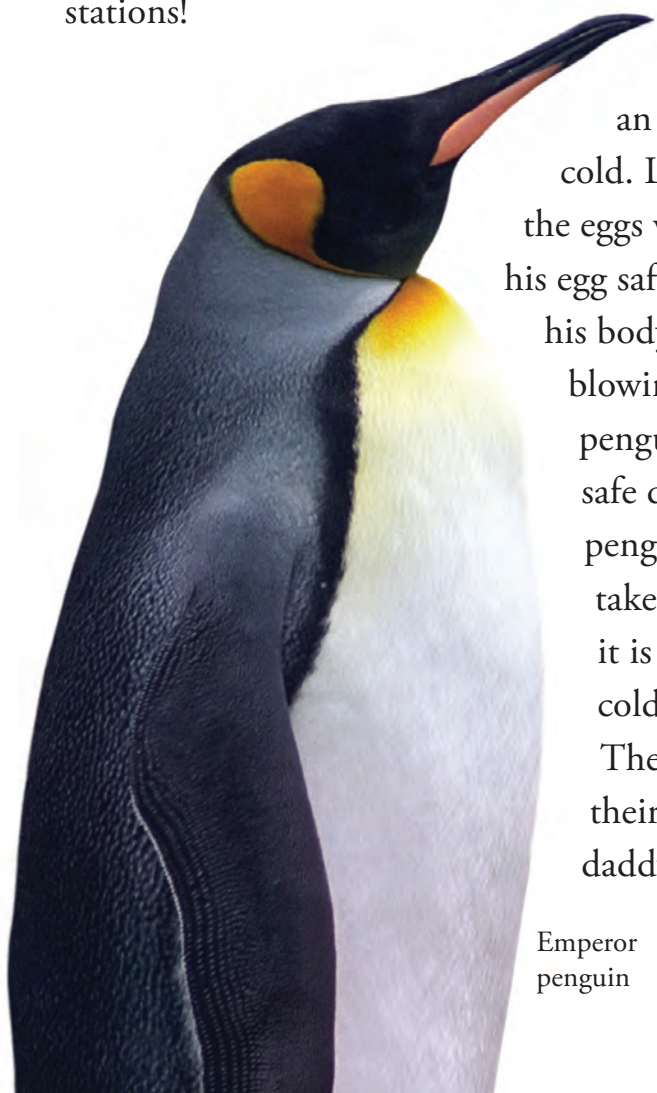
Only a few plants, such as moss and algae, can survive in Antarctica. However, the water around Antarctica is teeming with life. Many creatures, such as whales, fish, and seals, don't mind the icy waves. And despite the cold, thousands of penguins find Antarctica the perfect place to live. Some penguins live in Antarctica all year long, but others come for only part of the year—just like the people who work at the research stations!



Weddell seal

God gave the emperor penguins of Antarctica an amazing way to survive the continent's extreme cold. Like most penguins, it is the daddy's job to keep the eggs warm before they hatch. Each daddy balances his egg safely on top of his feet, keeping it nestled close to his body. Sometimes icy cold blizzards hit Antarctica, blowing winds as strong as 125 miles an hour. Emperor penguins know how to survive and keep their eggs safe during these terrible storms. Thousands of daddy penguins form a massive huddle to stay warm. They take turns being on the inside of the huddle where it is the warmest and on the outside where it is the coldest. They switch places by shuffling along the ice. They have to be careful so the eggs stay balanced on their feet. (Don't you think someone should get each daddy penguin a T-shirt that says "Best Dad Ever"?)

Emperor penguin



God teaches us many lessons through His creation. Think about the emperor penguins in Antarctica. Think of them standing in a blizzard while balancing an egg on their feet. The daddy penguins can't make it through a blizzard alone. They have to work together to stay warm. The babies in the eggs need the daddies to be responsible and keep them safe through the tough blizzards. We can learn from emperor penguins how to handle the tough times we face. We should be responsible and help each other! The storm will pass and the sun will shine again.

The Bible teaches us to:

**Do nothing from selfishness
or empty conceit,
but with humility of mind
regard one another
as more important than yourselves.
Philippians 2:3**



Emperor penguins

Activity Ideas

- Find **Antarctica** on the map at the back of this book.
- Complete “Lesson 3: Take a Trip to the South Pole” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 3 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 3 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Family Activity: Play Penguin Huddle (page 14)

Family Activity: Play Penguin Huddle

It's time to pretend everyone in your family is a daddy penguin. The one who can keep his egg off the ice the longest wins!

Supplies:

- 1 balloon per person

Directions:

1. Blow up one balloon for each person.
(Remember that popped balloons can be dangerous. Be sure no balloon pieces make it into the mouths of any small children at your house!)
2. Have everyone stand in a small, tight circle. Pinch the tied end of a balloon (also known as a penguin egg) between the sides of your feet.

3. When someone says, "Go," everyone waddles around in a circle and tries to keep his penguin egg balanced on his feet. If someone's balloon touches the floor (also known as Antarctic ice), that person is out. Everyone else keeps moving in a circle.
4. The person who can keep his penguin egg off the ice the longest is the winner!



Unit 2

Middle East



Wadi Bani Khalid, an oasis in Oman

Welcome to

Lesson 4

The Middle East!

The Middle East is the region where the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa come together. Find the **Middle East** on the map at the back of this book. Most of the events described in the Bible happened in this region. It was in the Middle East that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down, David fought Goliath, and Mary laid baby Jesus in a manger.

Much of the land in this part of the world is desert, but the area also has lakes, rivers, and farmland. Middle Eastern farmers raise olives, dates, figs, coffee, and many other crops.



Olive trees outside of Jerusalem, Israel

On the Table

If you sat down for dinner with a family in the Middle East, they would probably serve you food with smells, tastes, and textures different from what you eat every day. Here are a few foods that are common in the Middle East.

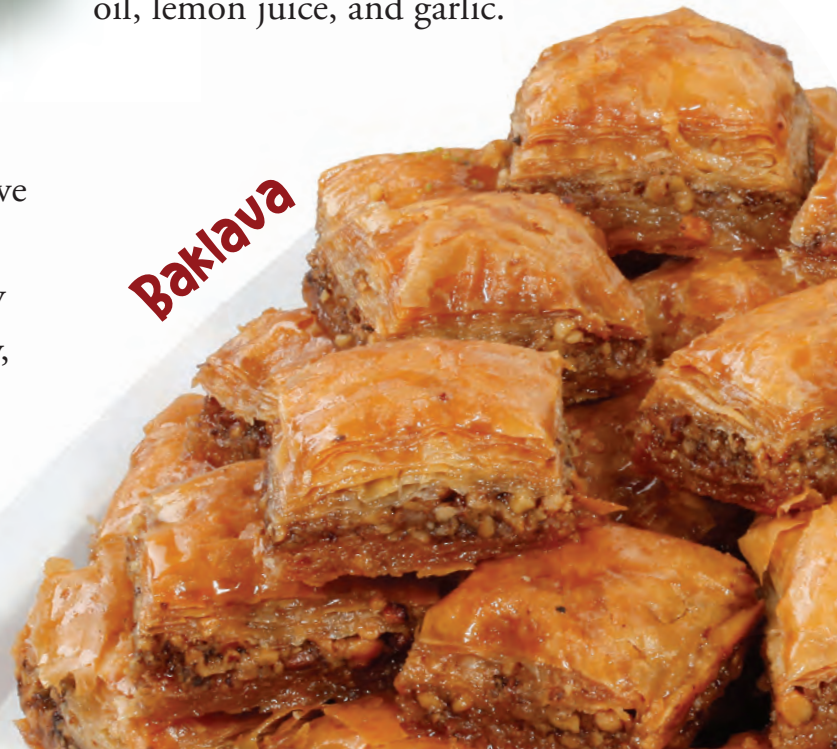
Falafel are balls made of mashed garbanzo beans mixed with herbs and spices. People fry the balls in oil, which makes them golden and crunchy on the outside. Street vendors sell falafel in bread pockets called pita bread.



People all over the Middle East enjoy a creamy dip called hummus. It has become a popular snack in many parts of the world. Like falafel, hummus is made from mashed garbanzo beans. The beans are then mixed with sesame seeds, olive oil, lemon juice, and garlic.

Many countries in the Middle East have their own special way of making baklava. Wherever you pick up a piece of this tasty treat, it is sure to be sweet, crunchy, nutty, buttery, and syrupy. Beware! Baklava will make your fingers mighty sticky.

Baklava



Everyday Life in the Middle East



Taking a walk in Yemen



At the market in Oman



Jewish boys in Israel



Science class in Saudi Arabia



Muslim mosque (place of worship) in Lebanon

Religion in the Middle East

Most people who live in the Middle Eastern country of Israel are Jewish. In the rest of the Middle East, most people are Muslim. Muslims follow the religion of Islam. Only a small number of people in the Middle East follow Jesus. Many of the people who do follow Jesus are persecuted for their faith. Sometimes Christians lose their jobs because of their faith. Sometimes their families won't have anything to do with them. Some Middle Eastern Christians have even lost their lives because they chose to follow Jesus.

Longing for Peace

At many times in history, life has not been peaceful in the Middle East. Different groups of people have wanted to control different areas. They haven't always wanted to get along with other groups of people. Some people in the Middle East have enjoyed peaceful lives, but many have endured fighting all around them. Even today, some children in the Middle East walk past bombed out buildings on their way to school. They can hear fighting in the streets while they are lying in bed at night.



Children in Syria during a war in 2013

Many people in the Middle East long for peace. God loves each person in the Middle East, no matter what religion they follow because He loves each person He has created. He wants them all to follow Jesus and to have His peace in their hearts.

The Bible teaches us that if people know Jesus, they can have peace no matter what is happening all around them. Jesus said to His disciples:

**Peace I leave with you; My Peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.
Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.**

John 14:27

Activity Ideas

- Find the **Middle East** on the map at the back of this book.
- Complete “Lesson 4: The Middle East” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 4 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 4 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Family Activity: Make Hummus (page 28)
- Begin reading *The Turtle of Oman* by Naomi Shihab Nye. Read the chapters titled “Earplugs” and “Lemon.” If you follow the reading schedule outlined in these boxes, you will finish this book by the end of Unit 5. (Parents, please refer to the section about this book in the Literature Guide.)

Lesson 5

The Dead Sea Scrolls

On a hot day in 1947, three teenage boys were tending goats in the desert of Qumran near the Dead Sea. One of the boys was looking for a goat that had wandered away when he spotted a cave high in a rocky cliff. He picked up a small stone and tossed it into the cave. The sound he heard made him stop and wonder. The stone had hit something inside the cave. It wasn't the goat and it wasn't another stone. It sounded like something had broken—something like pottery.



Goats in the desert of Jordan



Cave in Qumran

The goatherd decided to investigate. He climbed up the cliff and crept into the cave. He found large clay jars filled with ancient scrolls inside them. He could tell the scrolls were old—very old. He wondered who had written them. He wondered who had hidden them in the cave and how long they had been there.

The goatherd took the scrolls to an antique dealer. The dealer was delighted to buy them and asked the boy to go back and get more. Before long, news of the goatherd's discovery spread around the Middle East and around the world. He had made an astonishing discovery. The scrolls he found were indeed ancient. People had carefully placed them in that cave around 2,000 years ago!

Once news of his discovery spread, archaeologists came to look for more. Over the next several years people found over 900 ancient scrolls and pieces of scrolls hidden in 11 caves in the area. They found portions of almost every book in the Old Testament. They also found other ancient writings. Most of the scrolls were made from the skins of animals. A few were made from a plant called papyrus.

The scrolls survived so well because they were in caves. The caves kept the scrolls dry and also protected them from getting too hot or too cold.



Replica of a Dead Sea Scroll jar



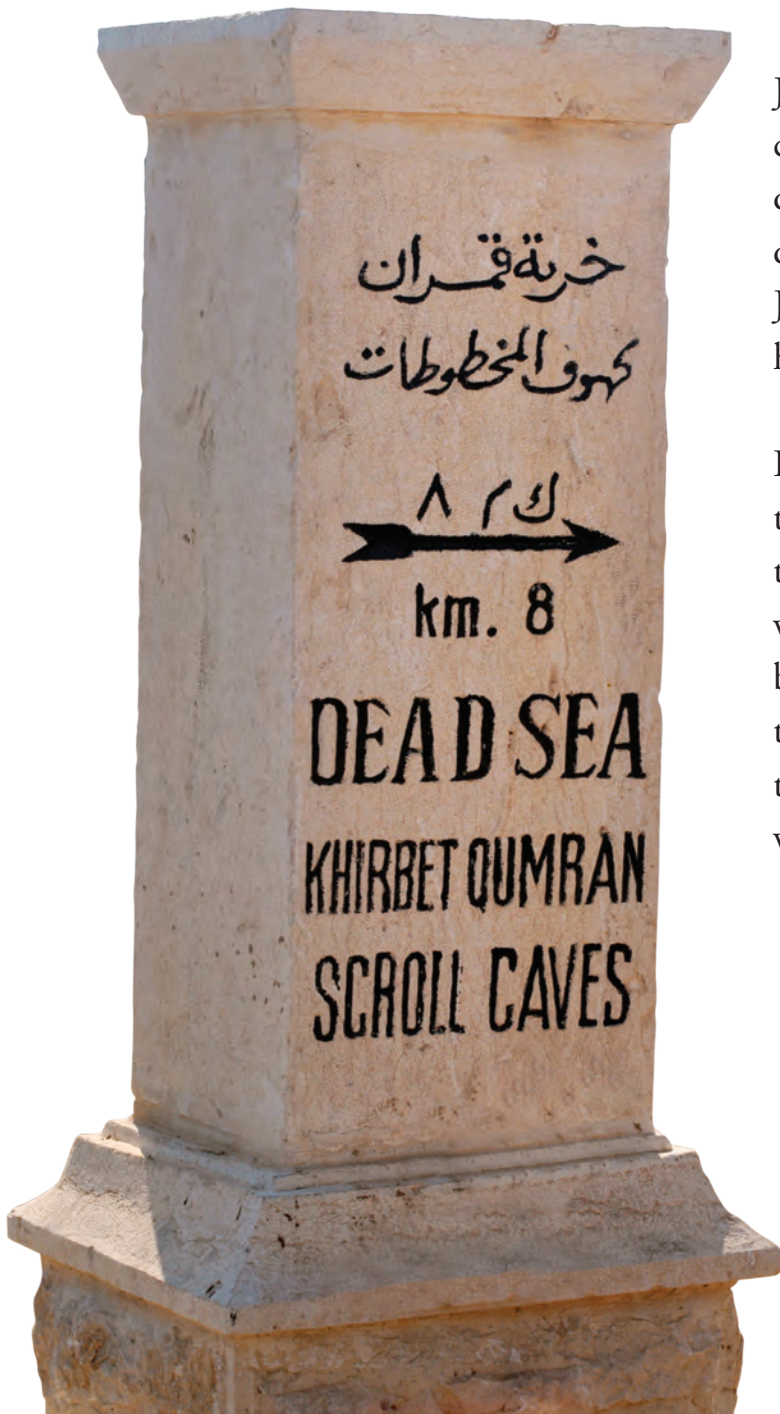
One of the Dead Sea Scrolls

People have different ideas about who wrote the words on the scrolls and why they were hidden in caves. Whatever the answers to those questions might be, the scrolls have helped people understand the Bible better. They have helped people believe that the Bible is true. They have helped us know more about what the world was like around the time of Jesus. Since they were discovered near the Dead Sea, the scrolls came to be called the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Dead Sea is the lowest spot on the surface of the earth. The Dead Sea has some of the saltiest water in the world. It is so salty that fish can't live in it. The high level of salt makes floating on the surface of the water easy. People come from all over the world to float on the Dead Sea.



Dead Sea



The Dead Sea is only 21 miles from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the capital of the country of **Israel**. This city is where Jesus died on the cross and where He rose from the dead. Jesus was standing on a mountain near Jerusalem when God took Him back up into heaven after His time on earth was finished.

People call this part of the world the Holy Land since it is where God chose for most of the events in the Bible to take place. Visiting the Holy Land is a special thing to do. To walk where Jesus walked is a wonderful experience, but not everyone in the world is able to travel to the Holy Land. We do have the opportunity, though, to go where Jesus is now and to be with Him there forever.

**In My Father's house
are many dwelling places:
if it were not so, I would have told you:
for I go to prepare a place for you.
If I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come again and receive you to Myself,
that where I am, there you may be also.
John 14:2-3**

Activity Ideas

- Find **Israel** on your globe.
- Complete “Lesson 5: The Holy Land” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 5 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 5 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Read the introduction to “Hinei Ma Tov” (*Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*, page 4) and listen to Track 3 at notgrass.com/FSOGBW.
- In your creative writing notebook, write a short story in which a child finds something ancient.
- Read the chapters titled “The Most Important Word in the World” and “Memorize” in *The Turtle of Oman*.

Lesson 6

The Grand Bazaar

In the city of Istanbul, **Turkey**, stands the Grand Bazaar. It is one of the oldest covered marketplaces still in use in the world. Beautifully carved stonework decorates the top of the entrance pictured below. Above the doorway, big gold letters say *Grand Bazaar* in Arabic and English. The numbers *1461* tell the year the Grand Bazaar opened. People have been buying, selling, and trading at this bazaar since before Christopher Columbus sailed to the New World! Many years ago, this marketplace was an important center for trade for a large territory called the Ottoman Empire. One hundred soldiers once guarded it like a fortress.



The Grand Bazaar from the air



The Grand Bazaar

Today the bazaar is still a bustling place, both outside and inside. Some families at the bazaar are tourists, looking for the perfect souvenirs to take home. Other families have been shopping and selling at the Grand Bazaar for generations.



Turkish lamps

Carts and dollies loaded with boxes and other goods rattle over the cobblestones outside. Street vendors offer food for sale. Customers can find stuffed mussels, pastries filled with spinach and cheese, carts piled with fresh Turkish bagels coated with sesame seeds, and much more.



Turkish bagels

Inside the Grand Bazaar is a maze of shops with a wide variety of goods for sale. Rows of colorful Turkish lamps hang from the ceiling. Stacks of ceramic bowls painted with floral designs in every color of the rainbow sit in neat rows on shelves. Shopkeepers set out traditional Turkish shoes for sale. Today most people in Turkey wear ordinary modern shoes, but these traditional Turkish shoes are fun. They look like elf shoes with their shiny gold trim, pointed toes, and colorful balls on the ends.



Ceramic bowls



Traditional Turkish shoes



Pomegranates, oranges, and apples



Spices

The shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar are often quite lively. They call out to people passing by, encouraging them to stop and buy something. Fruit sellers offer pomegranates, oranges, and apples, which are arranged like works of art. The scents from mounds of colorful spices tickle the noses of the customers as they shop.

The Grand Bazaar seems to go on forever! Shoppers find rugs for every room in the house, sunglasses in every style, instruments, antiques, clothing, and Turkish yo-yos. With over 3,500 shops, the Grand Bazaar really does seem to have it all.

Many shopkeepers offer tea to their customers. The Turkish people drink tea morning, noon, and night from small glasses without handles. The tea is usually very strong and slightly bitter.

If shoppers get a hankering for something sweet, they might look for a shop that sells Turkish delight, called *lokum* in Turkish. The original Arabic name for this treat means “comforting the throat.” Turkish delight is soft and a little squishy, similar to a gumdrop. Each piece is dusted with powdered sugar. Rosewater is the traditional flavor, but people today enjoy many varieties, including lemon, orange, apricot, strawberry, hazelnut, and sour cherry.



Turkish teapot and glasses



Turkish delight

Istanbul is nicknamed the City of Cats. Thousands of stray cats roam the streets and alleys of the city. Some make their way into the Grand Bazaar. See the cat in the picture at right? They make themselves at home, lounging on bolts of cloth and stretching out on rugs. The people of Istanbul have been feeding, petting, and adoring their little kitty neighbors for hundreds of years.



God's world is full of fascinating places. The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, Turkey, is just one of them. God has filled His world with fascinating people, including you! God gives the people He creates special abilities so that we can create things that are beautiful, useful, and delicious. What do you like to create? Yummy cookies, beautiful pictures, block towers? The Bible teaches us that whatever we do, whether we are talking or playing or creating, we should always do everything for God's glory.



**Whatever you do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks through Him
to God the Father.
Colossians 3:17**



Inside the Grand Bazaar

Activity Ideas

- Find **Turkey** on your globe.
- Complete “Lesson 6: The Grand Bazaar” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 6 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 6 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Read the introduction to “The Criticism of Men” (*Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*, page 5), and listen to Track 4 at notgrass.com/FSOGBW.
- Read the chapters titled “Better or Worse,” “Slow,” and “Know Your Michigan Turtles” in *The Turtle of Oman*.

Family Activity: Make Hummus

Hummus is popular all over the Middle East. You can buy it in grocery stores around the world, but today you get to make a batch in your own kitchen! On May 8, 2010, in the country of Lebanon, a group of around 300 chefs worked together to create the largest batch of hummus on record. It weighed over 23,000 pounds! This recipe won't make quite that much.

Ingredients:

- 1 can chickpeas (15.5 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 1 clove garlic
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup very cold water
- olive oil
- paprika
- pita bread or veggie sticks (such as bell peppers and carrots) for dipping

Directions:

1. Squeeze the juice out of the lemon.
2. Pour the chickpeas into a colander and rinse.
3. Add the chickpeas, tahini, garlic, lemon juice, and salt to a food processor or blender.
4. Begin blending at a low speed.



5. Slowly add in the cold water while the mixture is blending.
6. Blend until the mixture is smooth and creamy. This should take approximately 5 minutes.
7. Once blended, transfer the hummus to a shallow bowl.
8. Using the back of a spoon, create a swirl or a well in the center of the hummus. Drizzle olive oil into the well.
9. Sprinkle paprika over the top of your hummus.
10. Serve with pita bread and/or veggie sticks.



Be safe in the kitchen! Children must have adult supervision.

Unit 3

Middle East



Bsharri, Lebanon, in the Kadisha Valley

Lesson 7

Camels

For thousands of years, camels have helped the people of the Middle East survive. Camels have carried people across hot desert sand. They have carried people's belongings when they have moved from place to place. They have carried things people wanted to sell to the places where people would buy them. Camel meat and camel milk have kept people fed. Long ago, soldiers rode camels into battle.

Some people still depend on camels today, but most people in the Middle East live in modern cities. They travel in cars, buses, and trains. Even though people don't need camels as much as they used to, camels are still an important part of Middle Eastern

culture. *Culture* is a word that refers to the traditions and customs of a specific place or group of people.

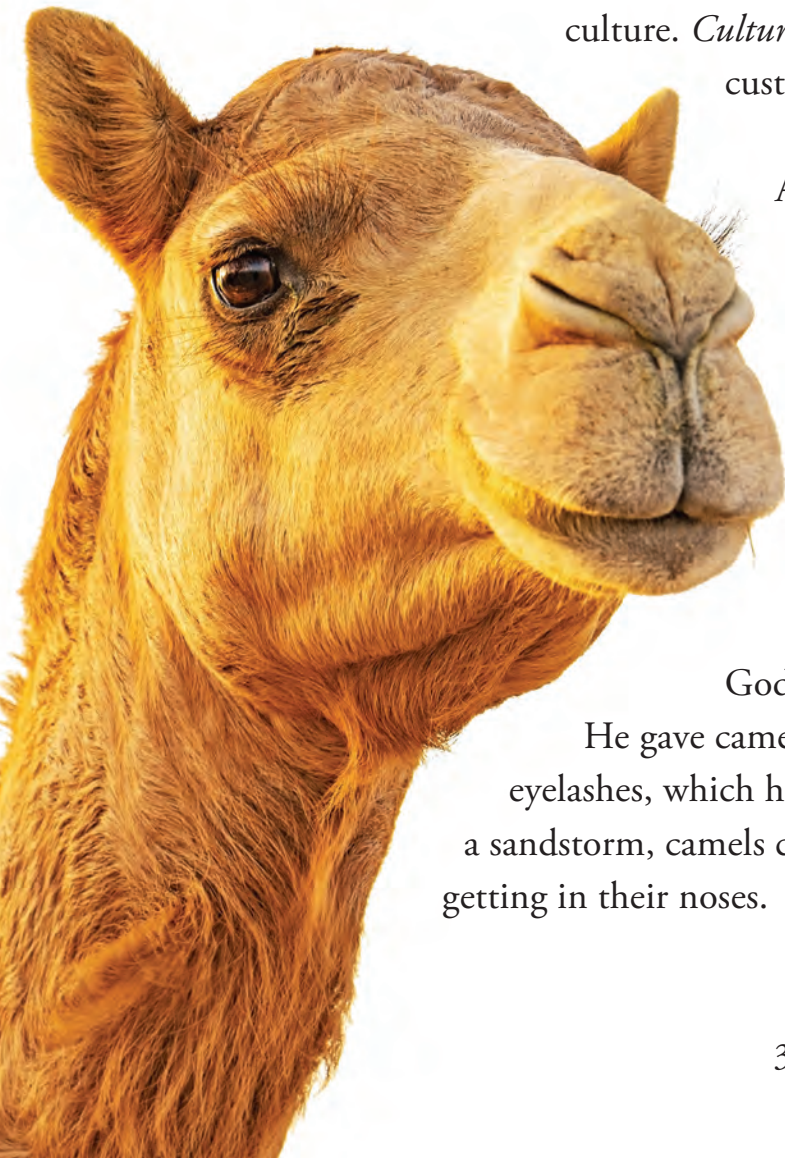
Many people in the Middle East speak Arabic. The Arabic language has over 100 words for *camel*. One word means "a camel that drinks every two days." Another means "a camel that is easily scared."

The best camels cost a great deal of money. Some people pay over \$1,000,000 for just one!

God's Design

God created camels to thrive in hot, dry deserts.

He gave camels three sets of eyelids and two rows of eyelashes, which help keep sand out of their eyes. During a sandstorm, camels can close their nostrils to keep sand from getting in their noses.





United Arab Emirates

Camels store a great deal of water inside their bodies. They store so much water that they can go for many days at a time without a drop to drink. When they do drink, they might drink 30 gallons of water in 13 minutes!

The body temperature of animals such as dogs, cats, and horses stays about the same throughout the day. Camels are different. A camel's body temperature goes up and down several degrees. This helps the camel keep from sweating. Sweating would make it lose some of the moisture stored in its body.

Camels store up to 80 pounds of fat in their humps. When a camel isn't able to eat for a while, it uses the stored fat for nourishment. If a camel hasn't had much to eat in a long time, its hump will begin to droop. After the camel eats some hearty food, the hump will stand back up.



Saudi Arabia



Oman

Camel Racing

People in the Middle East have long enjoyed watching and participating in camel races. Camel owners make sure their racing camels eat a special diet, which might include dates, milk, and honey.

Camels used to race with people riding on their backs. Today many camels run with robots on their backs instead. Owners drive alongside the racetrack in cars so they can keep track of their camels and the robots on their backs. The robots have whips, which trainers control with a remote during a race. Trainers talk to their camels during a race by using walkie-talkies that are connected to speakers on the robots. They urge their camels to go faster as they would if they were riding the camels themselves.



Camel races in Qatar



At a festival in Saudi Arabia

Beauty Contests

Many owners put their female camels in beauty contests. Each camel is judged for how she walks, how tall she is, the length of her neck, the shape of her lips, the size of her hooves, and the look of her ears. The perfect camel is neither too fat nor too skinny. At some contests, winning camels can earn their owners millions of dollars in prize money.

Camels in the Bible

Camels have been important in the Middle East all the way back to Bible times. The Bible mentions camels several times in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Camels were a sign of wealth, just as they are in the Middle East today. Jesus used camels to teach His followers an important truth. He wanted them to know that having a lot of money can make it hard for some people to trust God. Jesus knew it would be easy for them to trust in earthly riches instead of trusting in God.

**And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you,
it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.
Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel
to go through the eye of a needle,
than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
Matthew 19:23-24**



Iran

Activity Ideas

- Complete “Lesson 7: Camels” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 7 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 7 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Read the introduction to “Nine Camels” (*Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*, page 6) and listen to Track 5 at notgrass.com/FSOGBW.
- Read the chapters titled “Cat Without a Map,” “Get Me Out of Here,” and “Peace to All the Sardines” in *The Turtle of Oman*.

Lesson 8

Pearl Diving

Long ago, women in the Middle East who lived near the **Persian Gulf** gathered on its shore, looking out over the water. With the sun in their eyes and with longing in their hearts, they squinted into the distance, trying to make out the shape of a ship on the horizon. Their husbands and fathers, sons and cousins, friends and neighbors were on the ships they were longing to see. When someone spotted a ship, the women clapped and sang at the water's edge. They sang about the hardships their men faced on the water. The men on the boats often sang as well, accompanied by a steady beat on a drum. One man on each ship was the designated lead singer. The men had special songs for different parts of their work, such as spreading the sails or rowing the ship. Men, women, and children lifted their voices and sang about the work that was an important part of life for all of them: pearl diving.



Illustration of pearl diving in the Persian Gulf from 1870

Pearls are small round objects that form inside of oysters. Oysters are mollusks, which are animals that do not have bones and usually live inside a hard shell. Sometimes a small object gets inside an oyster's shell and irritates it. The oyster coats the object with layer after layer of a special fluid that the oyster makes inside its shell. Over time the fluid becomes hard, and the coated object turns into a beautiful, shimmering pearl.



Pearl inside a shell from the Persian Gulf

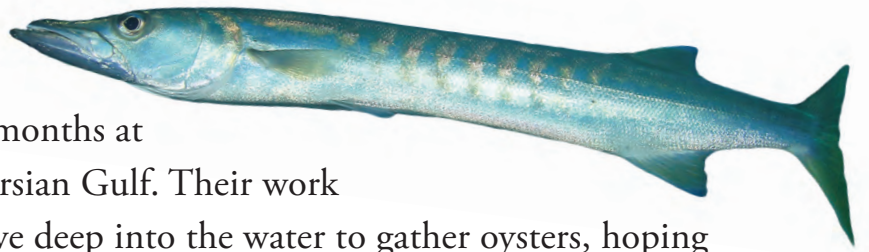
People around the world have worn pearls as jewelry for thousands of years. In many places, pearls were once the most valuable jewelry a person could own. One of the best places in the world to find pearls was in the Persian Gulf, a large body of water in the Middle East.



Woman wearing pearls and Middle Eastern clothing



Persian Gulf shore, United Arab Emirates



Pearl divers once left home for months at a time to hunt for oysters in the Persian Gulf. Their work was extremely dangerous. They dove deep into the water to gather oysters, hoping there would be a pearl inside at least one of them. Sailors aboard the ships used ropes to pull the divers back to the surface. Diving to such great depths sometimes caused the divers to have headaches. Sometimes they suffered brain damage. Divers had to keep a sharp lookout for dangerous sharks and barracudas.



Barracudas

Today most of the world's pearls are raised on oyster farms instead of being harvested in the wild.

Though people of the Middle East do not harvest many oysters today, pearl diving remains an important part of the region's history and culture. People in the Middle East still sing songs about pearl diving and participate in pearl diving celebrations and competitions. The Pearl Monument pictured below is in the tiny country of Qatar, which is on a peninsula in the Persian Gulf. The fountain is just one way that country celebrates its history of pearl diving.

The Pearl Monument in Doha, Qatar





Manama, the capital city of Bahrain, on the Persian Gulf

There aren't as many pearl divers in the Middle East as there once were, but pearls are still in the Persian Gulf, just waiting to be discovered. Tourists can take a boat ride into the Gulf and hunt for their own pearls. Would you want to go? You would be allowed to collect up to 60 oysters and open them right on the boat. You might not find a single pearl, but then again, you might find the most beautiful pearl anyone has ever seen.

It is amazing to realize that God created every single pearl that anyone has ever found, plus all the ones that are still waiting to be discovered. Each pearl declares to us a little something of the beauty and majesty of our Maker.

Jesus once taught His followers that the kingdom of heaven is worth everything we have by comparing it to a pearl:

**The kingdom of heaven
is like a merchant seeking fine pearls,
and upon finding one pearl of great value,
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45-46**



Pearl

Activity Ideas

- Find the **Persian Gulf** on your globe.
- Complete “Lesson 8: The Persian Gulf” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 8 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 8 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Read the introduction to “Pearl Diving Song” (*Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*, page 9) and listen to Track 6 at notgrass.com/FSOGBW.
- In your creative writing notebook, imagine that you live in the Middle East 200 years ago. Your father is a Persian Gulf pearl diver. Write a letter telling a friend about your father's work.
- Read the chapters titled “Looking,” “Big Day,” “Faces,” “Harmony,” and “How Quickly a Mood Changes” in *The Turtle of Oman*.

Lesson 9

The Falcon Souq

Hooded
falcon



Step inside a shop in the Falcon Souq in Doha, **Qatar**. In front of you are rows of perches with falcons standing on them. Falcons are birds of prey that are very valuable to people in the Middle East. A *souq* is a marketplace.

Once inside the shop, have a seat on the couch and enjoy a cup of tea. If you see a falcon you might like to buy, the shopkeeper will give you a thick, heavy glove to wear while you hold the bird. Without the glove, the bird's sharp talons would tear your hand to pieces.



The falcons in the shop wear leather hoods over their eyes. Since falcons get scared easily, the hoods help keep them calm as customers come and go throughout the day.

The shops in the Falcon Souq sell all sorts of accessories you might want to buy for your falcon. You can find perches, bells, food, medicine, and more. You can choose from several different colors of hoods for your favorite bird. Some hoods are decorated with feathers or thin leather strips. Which type of hood would you like to buy?



Falcon hoods



Entrance to the Falcon Souq



Falcons in the Falcon Souq



Qatari boys with a falcon



Falconry glove



Falcon hospital entrance

Falcons have been important to the people of the Middle East for thousands of years. People once trained these birds to fly over the desert and hunt for smaller animals and birds for their families to eat. Falconry became a popular sport and is still popular today. Falcon owners now train their birds to compete in races with other falcons.

Some wealthy men in Qatar are willing to pay thousands of dollars for the best falcon they can find. Some Qatari parents teach their children the skills of falconry to help them become patient, courageous, and self-disciplined.

Near the Falcon Souq is a government hospital—for falcons! Falcon owners bring their beloved pets here when the birds are sick or injured. They bring them to have their noses, eyes, and ears cleaned out. Sometimes the birds need to have an X-ray taken. Sometimes they need treatment for lead poisoning. Some falcons need to have a tumor removed. Some have been injured

and need to have missing feathers replaced. Some require surgery on a broken bone or a fractured beak. If you spend much time in the waiting room at the hospital, you might see someone give his falcon a kiss. Qatari men do it all the time!

In Qatar and throughout the Middle East, falcons are prized possessions. Some falcons participate in beauty contests. Qatar Airways allows passengers to bring their birds along on flights. The birds and their owners even get to sit together on the plane. The next time you take your falcon with you on a flight, make sure you remember to bring his passport! (Some Middle Eastern countries really do issue passports for falcons.)



Does the idea of kissing a falcon or taking a falcon on a plane seem odd to you? Things you do every day might seem odd to kids in other parts of the world. Our world doesn't have just one culture or just one set of customs. Think how dull and boring the world would be if everyone was the same!



Children with a falcon in Qatar

**O clap your hands, all peoples: shout to God with the voice of joy.
For the Lord Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth.
Psalm 47:1-2**

Activity Ideas

- Find **Qatar** on your globe.
- Complete “Lesson 9: Qatar” in the *Atlas Workbook*.
- Answer the questions for Lesson 9 in the *Lesson Review*.
- Color the picture for Lesson 9 in the *Coloring Book*.
- Family Activity: Make Pet Passports (page 42)
- Read the chapters titled “Delicious Detours,” “Almost Lost,” and “No Roof” in *The Turtle of Oman*.

Family Activity: Make Pet Passports

When people around the world want to travel to another country, they apply for passports from the government of their country. Travelers must show these passports when they visit other countries. Some Middle Eastern countries issue passports for falcons as well as for people! Falcon owners show these passports when they travel with their birds. Follow the instructions below to make a passport for a real or imaginary pet.



Supplies:

- 2 pieces of white paper
- 1 piece of card stock or construction paper
- ruler
- scissors
- stapler
- pencil or pen
- picture of pet (printed or drawn), 2" x 2"

Directions:

1. Cut four rectangles of white paper that each measure 5" x 7".
2. Cut a piece of colored card stock or construction paper that measures 5" x 7" for the cover of your passport.
3. Place the colored and white pages in a stack and fold them in half to make a book. Unfold the stack and staple the pages together on the fold.
4. Decorate the cover of your passport. Include the word PASSPORT and the name of a country. You can write the name of the country where you live, a different country, or an imaginary country.
5. On the first page of your passport, write a patriotic quote—something said by a famous person from your country.
6. You will need a picture of your pet for the second page. You can use a printed picture of a real pet, or you can draw a picture of your real

or imaginary pet. Cut your picture so that it measures 2" x 2". Turn your passport sideways and glue the picture off to the side on the second page. See example below.

7. Beside the picture, write these words and then fill in the information:

Name:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Gender:

Date of Issue: (write today's date)

Date of Expiration: (five years later)

8. When someone with a passport visits another country, officials in the other country often stamp a page inside his passport. Choose at least three countries and imagine your pet has visited them. Draw three rectangular stamps in your pet's passport. Inside each stamp, write the name of one country, along with the date of your pet's visit.



Sources

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- 130 Berti Dosti (all)
- 131 Berti Dosti

Index

- Afghanistan, 220-223
Agriculture, 16, 65, 105, 141, 174-175, 178-181, 212, 226-227, 231, 255, 274, 290-293, 360-363, 374-377
Airplanes, 41, 318, 394-396
Alabaster Coast, 142-145
Albania, 128-131
Amazon, 62, 380, 384-387
Angel Falls, 394-397
Antarctica, 1, 10-13
Antigua and Barbuda,
Arctic, 6-9, 199-201, 310, 318-321
Argentina, 11, 407
Art, 11, 25, 43, 46, 72-74, 78, 80-83, 116, 123-125, 144, 147, 151-153, 159, 165, 170-173, 175, 182, 184-191, 199, 202-209, 211, 214, 217, 228, 230, 232, 241, 243, 246, 248, 251, 259, 263, 276-277, 294, 314, 328-331, 349-351, 356, 375, 390, 393, 398, 405
Atlantic Ocean, 7, 62, 123, 156-159, 198, 329, 332-335, 375, 384, 389
Australia, 10-11, 45, 186, 282, 286-289, 294

Baboons, 104-107
Bahrain, 37, 49
Bangladesh, 53, 234-237
Baobab trees, 108-111
Barbados, 375
Belarus, 183
Belém Tower 122-125
Belize, 339, 346-349
Benin, 71
Bermuda, 310, 323, 332-335
Bible, 16, 22-23, 33, 51, 92-93, 100-103, 117, 130, 227-229, 236, 243, 257, 303, 354-355, 414-415
Big Ben, 164-167
Bolivia, 408-411
Bond, Michael, 402
Books, 44-47, 87, 240, 361, 376
Brazil, 298-299, 380, 388-391

Buddhism, 214-215, 226-229, 247, 276-279
Burg Eltz, 150-153
Burj Khalifa, 52-55, 397
Burkina Faso, 80-83
Butterflies, 335, 342-345
Buzkashi, 220-223

Cable cars, 264, 388-391
Cambodia, 272-275
Camels, 30-33, 64
Canada, 7, 309-313, 315, 318, 324-327, 343, 346
Caribbean, 198, 310, 365-377
Castles, 150-153, 248-251
Cathedrals, 116-117, 206-209,
Ceesay, Isatou, 78
Chile, 380-381, 412-415
China, 5, 193, 212, 215, 253-265, 330
Chirikov Aleksei, 198-201
Christianity, 11, 18, 51, 73-75, 82-83, 86-89, 91-93, 100-103, 116-117, 128-131, 138-139, 143, 152, 170-173, 175, 189, 206-209, 214-215, 226-229, 234-237, 246-247, 254-257, 278-279, 306, 354-355, 369, 372-373
Clothing, 3, 18-19, 25, 31-32, 35, 40-41, 46-48, 59, 63, 67, 71, 76, 78, 85, 92-93, 101-103, 106, 129-131, 152, 158, 173, 178, 184-187, 194, 200, 207, 215, 220-221, 230, 232-237, 241, 245-248, 256-257, 259, 276-278, 284-285, 292-293, 296-299, 301-304, 306-307, 312-317, 330-331, 340-341, 354-355, 360-363, 368-369, 396, 402
Colombia, 393
Communism, 128, 172-173, 191, 207-208, 246, 259
Cook Islands, 283-284, 304-307
Cork, 118-121
Costa Rica, 339
Cowboys, 312-313
Croatia, 308
Cuba, 366, 375-377
Czechia, 184-187

D'Arcy, William Knox, 48
 Dance, 82, 200, 284, 304, 315-317, 340-341, 369, 372
 Davis, "Papa" Tom, 304-307
 Dead Sea Scrolls, 20-23
 Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa),
 Denmark, 7, 199, 318, 330
 Dikes, 146-147
 Dominican Republic, 366-367, 370
 Dosti, Berti and Tatjana, 128-131
 Ecuador, 398-401
 Education, 86, 102, 236, 255, 273, 292, 305, 340, 361, 363
 Egypt, 63, 66-69, 384
 El Salvador, 352-355
 Elephants, 2, 53, 94, 109, 230-233, 269, 276
 Estonia, 169, 170, 173, 300
 Ethiopia, 79
 European Union, 114
 Exploration, 123, 198-201, 375

 Falcons, 38-41
 Fiji, 282, 296-299
 Finland, 7, 178-181, 198
 First Nations, 314-317
 Fjords, 174-177, 311
 Food, 17, 25, 28, 59, 112, 115, 154, 181, 192-196, 212-213, 216-219, 238, 280, 283, 315, 320, 322, 339, 357, 360-364, 399, 413-414
 France, 5, 11, 82, 86, 115, 124, 142-145, 205, 207, 282, 329-330, 372
 French Polynesia, 282, 295

 Gabon, 86-89
 Galapagos Islands, 398-401
 Gambia, The, 78
 Gámez, Job, 360-363
 Germany, 11, 86-89, 113, 117, 150-153
 Ghana, 59
 Giant's Causeway, 160-163
 Gingerbread, 192-196
 Grand Bazaar (Turkey), 24-27
 Grand Palace (Thailand), 276-279
 Great Wall (China), 262-265
 Greece, 3, 132-135
 Greenland, 7, 310-311, 318-321

 Guatemala, 351, 356-359, 364
 Gyalsang, 226-229

 Ha Long Bay, 268-271
 Haiti, 370-373, 377
 Hanacky Kroj 184-187
 Hangul, 240-243, 252
 Himeji Castle, 248-251
 Hinduism, 214-215, 232, 236
 Homes, 7, 80-83, 91-92, 100-101, 134-135, 150-153, 171, 235-237, 244-247, 254, 272-274, 281, 300, 305, 332-334, 370-373, 410
 Homeschooling, 292
 Honduras, 360-363
 Hormuz Island, 216-219
 Iceland, 7, 156-159, 318
 India, 53, 124, 212, 214-215, 230-233, 238
 Indian Ocean, 59
 Indonesia, 213
 Iran, 33, 43, 45, 48, 216-219
 Iraq, 44-48
 Ireland, 160-163
 Islam/Muslims, 18, 47, 51, 72-75, 82, 91, 214
 Israel, 16, 18, 20-23, 330
 Italy, 11, 115-116, 124, 136-139

 Jamaica, 366-367, 375
 Japan, 114, 193, 205, 213, 239, 248-251, 259, 298, 308, 330
 Jordan, 20, 49
 Judaism, 18

 Kassena, 80-83
 Kazakhstan, 245
 Kenya, 2, 79, 95
 Kopernik gingerbread, 192-195
 Ksara, Medhi, 72-75
 Kupovka, Olga, 184-186
 Kuwait, 45, 49
 Kyrgyzstan, 221

 Language, 3, 30, 58, 73, 92, 94, 98, 186, 229, 240-243, 282, 300-303, 308, 338, 340, 347, 380
 Laos, 267
 Latvia, 170, 173

Leaning Tower of Pisa, 136-139
 Lebanon, 18, 28-29
 Libya, 65
 Lithuania, 170-173, 182
 Lü Xiao Min, 255-257

 Madagascar, 108-111
 Malta, 117
 Martinique, 377
 Matee, Nzambi, 79
 Matryoshka dolls, 202-205
 Maya, 338, 346-349, 352
 Medicine, 11, 39-40, 86-89, 108, 236, 273, 305-307, 412
 Mexico, 259, 310, 312-313, 337-349
 Migration, 94-97, 342-345
 Mining, 412-415
 Monet, Claude, 144
 Money (currency), 114, 223
 Mongolia, 3, 244-247
 Morocco, 63, 72-75, 259
 Mulenga, Aaron, 100-103
 Music and singing, 34-35, 82, 222, 236, 246, 254-257, 284-285, 299, 306, 315-317, 340, 354, 368-369, 413
 Muslims, *see* Islam
 Mwila, Charles, 100-103

 Native Americans, 314-317
 Nepal, 214, 226-229
 Netherlands, 146-149
 New Zealand, 282, 290-293, 304-307
 Nicaragua, 339
 Niger, 78
 Nigeria, 92
 Nixon, Richard and Pat, 259
 North Korea, 240-243
 North Macedonia,
 North Pole, 6-7
 Norway, 7-8, 174-177, 179, 330

 Oil / Petroleum, 48-51, 218-219, 368
 Olympic Games, 298-299
 Oman, 15, 18, 31, 218

 Pacific Ocean, 198-201, 282-285, 296-299, 304-307
 Paddington (bear), 402, 405
 Pakistan, 53, 225
 Panama, 310
 Pandas, 258-261, 266
 Papua New Guinea, 282, 284, 300-303
 Pearls, 34-37
 Penguins, 1, 11-14, 400
 Persian Gulf, 34-37, 54, 218
 Peru, 3, 379, 381, 402-405
 Philippines, 212
 Poland, 45, 192-195
 Polar bears, 9, 310, 324-327, 336
 Portugal, 118-125
 Proclaimer (audio Bible), 92-93
 Puffins, 156-159
 Pysanky eggs, 188-191
 Pyramids of Giza, 66-69

 Qatar, 32, 36, 38-41, 49, 259

 Radio, 73, 128-131
 Recycling, 76-79
 Refugees, 92-93, 186
 Reindeer, 178-181, 311, 319-320
 Rhinoceros, 123-125
 Rugby, 296-299
 Russia, 7, 11, 178, 186, 191, 197-210, 308, 330

 Sahara Desert, 62-65
 Salar de Uyuni, 408-411
 Sanjaasuren, Ganbat, 247
 Santorini 132-135
 Saudi Arabia, 18, 31-32, 45, 50-51
 Schweitzer, Albert and Helene, 86-89
 Semuc Champey 356-359
 Serengeti, 94-97
 Skyscrapers, 49, 52-55, 346
 Slovakia, 300
 Smith, Conrad and Jo, 290-293
 Somalia, 300
 South Africa, 58-59, 79, 105-107, 112
 South Korea, 232, 240-243, 259
 South Sudan, 91-93
 Spain, 118-121, 127, 338

Sports, 32, 40, 220-223, 296-299, 312-313
 St. Basil's Cathedral (Russia), 206-209
 St. Vincent and Grenadines,
 Statue of Liberty, 54, 328-331
 Sudan, 85, 91
 Sugar, 26, 112, 196, 322, 364, 374-377, 381, 389
 Sweden, 7, 178
 Switzerland, 141
 Syria, 19

Tanzania, 2, 59, 79, 94-97
 Tea garden people, 234-237
 Thailand, 214, 276-279
 Thien Cung Cave, 268-269
 Tonga, 281-282
 Tonle Sap Lake, 272-275
 Transportation, 11, 30-33, 106-107, 122-123,
 175, 198-201, 218-219, 230-233, 264, 272-
 275, 301, 304, 307, 309, 318, 325-326, 331,
 356-357, 388-391, 396-397
 Trinidad and Tobago, 368-369
 Tunisia, 65
 Turkey (Türkiye), 24-27, 193

Uganda, 3, 92-93
 Ukraine, 188-191

United Arab Emirates, 31, 35, 52-55, 218
 United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and
 Northern Ireland), 45, 115-116, 142, 155, 160-
 167, 333, 402, 405
 United States, 4, 7, 11, 45, 63, 73, 77, 89, 114,
 201, 258-260, 282, 306, 310-317, 322, 328-
 331, 333, 343, 346, 356, 363, 384
 Uzbekistan, 211

Venezuela, 394-397
 Vietnam, 213, 268-271

Waterfalls, 65, 174, 359, 370, 394-397
 Wide, Jim, 106-107
 Wildebeests, 94-97
 Windmills, 146-149

Yemen, 18
 Yurts, 244-247

Zambia, 5, 100-103
 Zanzibar, 59