CHAPTER 14

West-Central Europe

Section 1: Physical Geography
Section 2: France
Section 3: Germany
Section 4: The Benelux Countries
Section 5: The Alpine Countries
Section 1
Physical Geography

Objectives:

- Where are the area’s major landform regions?
- What role do rivers, canals, and harbors play in the region?
- What are west-central Europe’s major resources?
Central Europe

Map showing Central Europe including countries like Germany, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and others. Cities and capitals are marked, and the map includes major geographical features such as rivers and seas.
West-Central Europe’s major landform regions are arranged like a “fan.”

- Lowlands—the Northern European Plain and Brittany, a peninsula rising slightly above the Plain
- Uplands—the Pyrenees Mountains, the Massif Central, and the Schwarzwald, or Black Forest
- Mountains—the Alps
Section 1
Physical Geography

The role of rivers, canals, and harbors in West-Central Europe:

- Rivers and canals are important for trade and travel.
- Harbor cities are located where the rivers flow into the seas.
West-Central Europe’s major resources are:

- Some of the most productive fields—rich in loess—in the world
- Iron ore, coal, and natural gas deposits
- Hydroelectric power in Switzerland and Austria
- Natural beauty
SECTION 1

Physical Geography

Major Landform Regions
Northern European Plain, Pyrenees, Alps, and Massif Central

Roles of Canals, Rivers, and Harbors
Help facilitate the movement of raw materials, goods, and people

Major Resources
Fertile soil, iron ore, coal, natural gas, nuclear power, hydroelectric power, and natural beauty
Section 2
France

Objectives:
- Which foreign groups affected the historical development of France?
- What are the main features of French culture?
- What products does France export?
Foreign groups and the historical development of France:

- Early Romans established Latin-based language that developed into French
- A.D. 400s—the Franks conquered Gaul
- The Normans invaded and settled in western France (Normandy).
- 1337–1453—England tried to capture France in the Hundred Years War
World War 1 in France
Foreign groups and the historical development of France: (continued)

- 1815—Napoleon defeated by outside alliance
- World War I—Germans controlled parts of northern and eastern France
- World War II—Germans controlled parts of northern and western France
The Treaty of Versailles alone sparked the hate and rage of WWII from the Germans because they were in a depression and were desperate for any sort of redemption. Redemption is what Hitler offered and as soon as he came to power as the Fuhrer of Germany in 1934, he acted to regain the pride and honor of the Germans that was lost in the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler increased all military units, violating the Treaty of Versailles, and he prepares to once again conquer all of Europe. The Nazis begin to invade Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France by 1940 and Hitler then begins to tour Paris after only twenty days of assault. As a way of redeeming the German pride, Hitler forces the French to sign an official surrender in the same box-car that the Treaty of Versailles was signed in; he then proceeds to blow up the box-car. The invasion and capture of Paris was the morale booster of the Germans and the intimidation factor for the rest of the world and was the beginning of the reign of Adolf Hitler. That same year the Tripartite Pact is signed by Germany, Italy, and Japan which was the development of the Axis against the Allies.
Main features of French culture:

- France is 90 percent Roman Catholic.
- French is the primary language.
- The southern diet is Mediterranean and the northern diet includes more butter, herbs, and mushrooms.
- Wine and cheese are huge industries.
- July 14—Bastille Day is an important holiday.
Main features of French culture: (continued)

- France was the center of the impressionist movement in art

- France is a world leader in the arts and film industry.
France exports:

- Wheat, olives, wine, cheese, and other dairy products
### SECTION 2

**France**

#### INFLUENCES ON FRANCE’S EARLY HISTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celts</th>
<th>Romans</th>
<th>Franks</th>
<th>Normans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• migrated from eastern Europe to Gaul</td>
<td>• conquered Gaul</td>
<td>• conquered Gaul</td>
<td>• migrated from Normandy and conquered England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduced Celtic languages, including Breton</td>
<td>• introduced Roman law and government and established Latin-based language that developed into French</td>
<td>• Frankish emperor Charlemagne strengthened government and improved education</td>
<td>• Norman kings of England claimed throne of France, which led to Hundred Years’ War</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objectives:

- What effects have wars had on Germany?
- What are Germany’s major contributions to world culture?
- How did the division of Germany affect its economy?
Effects of war on Germany

- 1500s—Germany was the center of the \textit{Reformation}, which led to the costly Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Nearly a third of the population was killed.
- World War I—Germany and its allies were defeated
- 1945—Hitler and the Nazis were defeated by the Allies, and East Germany and West Germany were created.
- 1961—The Berlin Wall was built.
- 1990—East and West Germany were reunited.
Germany – W.W. 1
Germany World War II

U.S.S. Raven
Some of Germany’s major contributions to world culture are:

- Movable metal type for book printing (Johannes Gutenberg)
- 1700s–1800s—Germans led Europe in the development of classical music (Beethoven, Bach, Wagner)
- The Christmas tree tradition
The division of Germany and its economy:

- Berlin was isolated and economically restricted after World War II.
- East Germany was not rebuilt as well as West Germany.
- East Germany’s command economy was less productive than West Germany’s free-enterprise economy.
The division of Germany and its economy: (continued)

- Since reunification, Germany has sought to modernize the former East Germany.
- Ample resources, labor, and capital make Germany highly industrial.
### EFFECTS OF WARS ON GERMANY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thirty Years’ War</th>
<th>World War I</th>
<th>World War II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• many towns destroyed</td>
<td>• lost territory and overseas colonies</td>
<td>• Jewish population was nearly wiped out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• nearly one third of the population died</td>
<td>• paid heavy fines after the war</td>
<td>• divided into two countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objectives:

■ How did larger countries influence the Benelux countries?

■ What is this region’s culture like?

■ What are the Benelux countries like today?
Larger countries influenced the Benelux countries:

- Major battles of World War I were fought in Belgium.
- Germany occupied the Low Countries in World War II.
- Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg were founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949.
The Region’s Culture

- Luxembourg and Belgium are mostly Roman Catholic; the Netherlands is divided between Catholic, Protestant, and people with no religious ties.
- Dutch, Flemish, and French are spoken.
- Belgium has seen cultural conflicts between the Flemish and the Walloons.
- The region has many Asian and African immigrants.
- Rembrandt, Jan Vermeer, and Van Gogh represent the region’s artistic contributions.
The Benelux Countries Today

- The Netherlands’ tulips are famous.
- Cheese, chocolate, and cocoa are exported from Belgium and the Netherlands.
- The region’s cosmopolitan cites are centers of international business and government.
- The European Union and NATO are headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.
SECTION 4

The Benelux Countries

Influences from Larger Countries

- Ruled by France and the Holy Roman Empire
- Netherlands ruled by Spain
- Belgium ruled by France and the Netherlands
- WWI battles fought in Belgium
- Low Countries occupied by Germany during WWII

Culture of the Benelux Countries

- Belgians and Luxembourgers predominantly Roman Catholic
- Dutch evenly divided between Catholics, Protestants, and nonreligious persons
- Dutch spoken in Netherlands
- Flemish and French spoken in Belgium
Section 5
The Alpine Countries

Objectives:

- What are some of the major events in the history of the Alpine countries?
- What are some cultural features of this region?
- How are the economies of Switzerland and Austria similar?
Major events in the history of the Alpine countries:

- **1600s**—Switzerland became independent of the Roman Empire.
- **1400s**—Habsburgs of Austrian region ruled the Roman Empire.
- **After 1800**, Austrian Empire replaces Roman Empire and eventually becomes the dominant power in central Europe.
Major events in the history of the Alpine countries: (continued)

- 1867—Austrians agree to share power with the Hungarians, creating Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved after World War I.
Cultural features of the region:

- Switzerland is divided between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Austria is primarily Roman Catholic.
- German is the primary language spoken in the region.
- Christmas is the major religious holiday.
- Alpine region is renowned for its musical history. Mozart wrote symphonies and operas in Salzburg.
Luther's Christmas Tree

The story of Luther's creation of a Christmas tree lit with candles is pure legend - with nothing in the intensive Luther Scholarship to support the tale. It was said that he was walking on a bright snow-covered, star-lit night pondering the birth of Christ. Enthralled by the evergreen trees, the stars and the landscape, he took a tree inside and put candles on it to represent the majesty he felt about Christ's birth as Jesus came down from the stars to bring us eternal life. The first known decorated Christmas Tree however was at Riga in Latvia, in 1510. Tannenbaum songs date back to the late 1500's.
Similarities between the economies of Switzerland and Austria:

- Both are large producers of dairy products.
- Both are linked to Europe through excellent highways, trains, and airports.
- Both attract heavy tourism.
### COMPARING AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Invasion by Celts, Romans, and Germanic tribes; ruled by the Holy Roman Empire; part of Habsburg, Austrian, and Austro-Hungarian Empires; became republic; annexed by Germany; became republic</td>
<td>Invasion by Celts, Romans, and Germanic tribes; ruled by the Holy Roman Empire; gained independence in the 1600s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
<td>Predominantly Roman Catholic and German-speaking with small minority of Slovenes and Croatians; known for classical music</td>
<td>Majority of Swiss are Roman Catholic or Protestant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td>Dairy products, including cheese; Vienna is Austria’s commercial and industrial center</td>
<td>Dairy products, including cheese; manufacturer of watches, optical instruments, and other machinery; Zurich is the center of Swiss banking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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