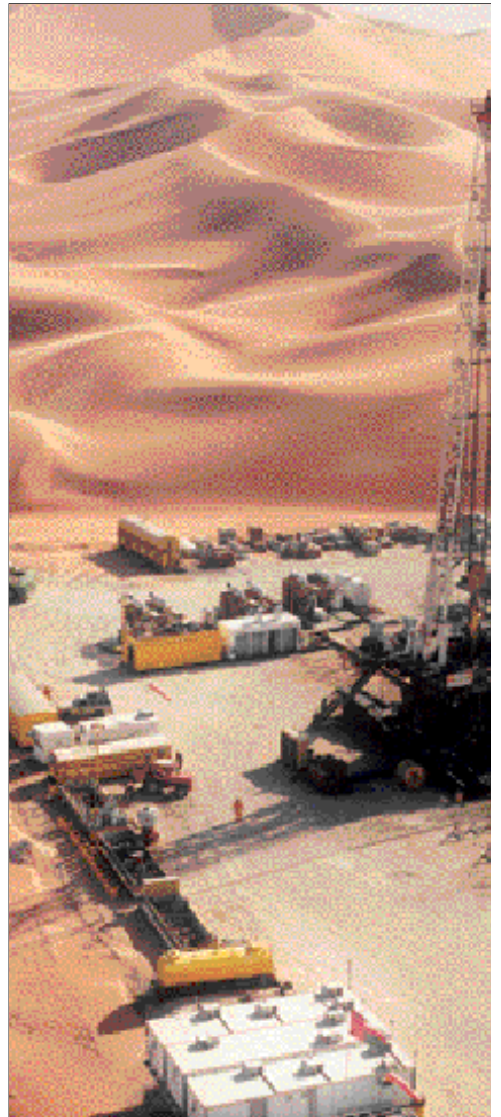


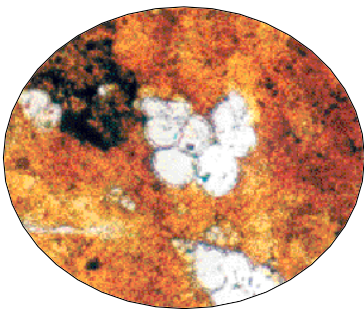
DISCOVERY OF OIL – EARLY EXPLORATION

In ancient times, people collected seepages of oil that came through the sand and seeped to make their wooden boats waterproof. These were early signs that oil was present in Arabia. However, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that anyone realised the enormous reserves of oil that lay beneath the deserts and seas. The way of life for the people of Arabia changed so dramatically after its discovery that the pre-oil and post-oil times seem like two different worlds. Oil was called the new 'black gold'. Twentieth century inventions such as cars and aeroplanes need petroleum, made from crude oil, to fuel them. Suddenly the rush to find oil was on. By 1932, it was certain that Arabia had oil. Bahrain was the first oil producer but it was not long before oil was found in other places, in much larger quantities. In the last ten years of the twentieth century, it was calculated that Arabia had 65 per cent of the world's oil resources.

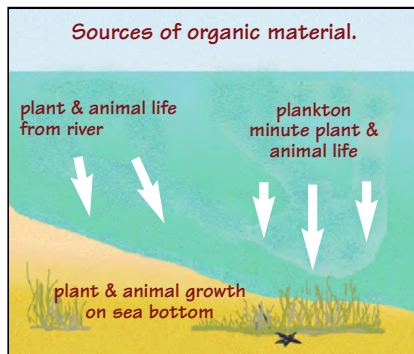


How is oil formed?

Oil is a *fossil fuel*. All the places where oil is found were once covered by sea. Tiny sea plants and animals that got their energy from the sun's heat and light sank to the seabed when they died and were covered by tiny particles of rock and minerals called *sediment*. Over millions of years, the layers of mud and sand turned into rock. As the animals decayed, heat and pressure on them produced oil.



Fossilised plankton



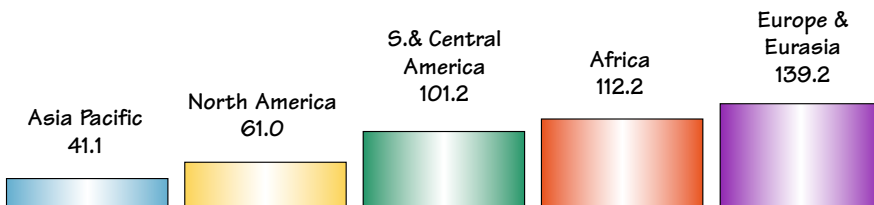
What are hydrocarbons?

The bodies of plants and animals contain oxygen, hydrogen and carbon. When plankton dies oxygen leaves their bodies and the remaining carbon and hydrogen turns into hydrocarbons. Oil and the natural gas that is often found in pockets above the oil are formed from hydrocarbon remains. Droplets of oil seeped into layered, porous rocks and were held there as a sponge holds drops of water. They were trapped between layers of harder rocks.

The largest reserves are in the Middle East.

Petroleum is found in many parts of the world, but some countries have much larger oil reserves than others. This chart shows proven oil reserves throughout the world. The numbers represent billions of barrels per region.

Middle East
733.9



Oil is measured in barrels.

