



4Q

The Strait of Gibraltar is a small place with a large role in history.

A **strait** is a narrow passage of water between two large masses of land.

It got that role because of its **strategic importance**. Its strategic value, however, was different at different times in the past, because it depended on the technology of the time.

1. Before people had good boats, it was the short way to cross from Africa to Europe.
2. For ancient Phoenicians, who had sailing ships, it was the way out to the Atlantic Ocean.
3. For Islamic Moors, with their powerful armies, it was a way to invade Christian Europe.
4. For ship captains from Genoa and Venice, it was the gateway to riches across the ocean.
5. For the British, it was a potential "tollgate" for oil tankers coming through the Suez Canal.
6. Now, in an age of missiles, satellites, and supertankers that are too big to fit through Suez, Gibraltar has very little strategic significance. (It's like the Erie Canal in the U.S.)

Project: Here are eight important straits around the world.

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|--|---|
| Bering - between Alaska and Russia | al Mandeb - between Africa and Arabia |
| Davis - between Canada and Greenland | Hormuz - between Iran and Arabia |
| Magellan - near the tip of South America | Korea - between Korea and Japan |
| Skaggerak - between Denmark and Norway | Malacca - between Singapore and Indonesia |

Pick a strait, and design a poster or projectable image to explain its strategic importance. Your poster should include at least five of the following:

- a world map to show the general location of the strait in the world system
- a close-up map to show the specific details of the strait and nearby countries
- a description of the strategic importance of the strait at a significant time in the past
- a description of at least one migration, trade route, invasion, or battle involving the strait
- a description of some countries that depend on using the strait in the world economy today
- a recommended policy for the United States in dealing with issues around the strait

Strategic Straits - Chokepoints for World Commerce

Background: A strait is a narrow place between continents or islands.

In peacetime, a strait is a good place to collect taxes or tolls from ships that go through.

In wartime, a strait is a good place to wait, because sooner or later ships may have to go through the strait in order to get to the ports on the other side. Moreover, it takes only a few warships or submarines to block many other ships from going through a strait.

Your job: Examine this list of historically important straits.

- 1) Use the latitude-longitude coordinates to find each strait on a map or computer file.
- 2) Identify the country or countries that control the strait.
- 3) Circle the Y if you think that country tends to be friendly toward the United States.
- 4) Circle the N if that country has not been friendly in recent years.
- 5) Circle the ? if you are not sure.
- 6) Write a brief for your congressperson, describing the results of your research.
Your brief should identify the three or four straits that you think are most likely to be targets for terrorist attack or other political complications.

Letter on map	Strait	Latitude	Longitude	Oil Transit (mdbl/day)	Country(s) in control	Friendly?
_____	Hormuz	27°N	56°E	15	_____	Y N ?
_____	Malacca	2°N	102°E	11	_____	Y N ?
_____	Bab el-Mandeb	13°N	43°E	4	_____	Y N ?
_____	Suez Canal	31°N	32°E	3	_____	Y N ?
_____	Bosporus	41°N	29°E	3	_____	Y N ?
_____	Gibraltar	36°N	6°W	2	_____	Y N ?
_____	Panama Canal	9°N	80°W	1	_____	Y N ?
_____	Florida	24°N	82°W	<1	_____	Y N ?
_____	Dover	51°N	1°E	<1	_____	Y N ?
_____	Korea	35°N	130°E	<1	_____	Y N ?
_____	Kattegat	56°N	13°E	<1	_____	Y N ?
_____	Bering	66°N	168°W	<1	_____	Y N ?

