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**More in Geography & Travel:**

**Ayers Rock Climbing Ban? (In the News)**  
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park officials have proposed a ban on climbing this giant monolith, which Northern Territory government leaders argue will hinder tourism and economic growth.

**Iran (Featured Country)**  
This mountainous, arid, and ethnically diverse country of southwestern Asia remains in a state of turmoil following the recent presidential election.

**Washington, D.C. (Featured City)**  
Planned expressly as a national capital, this city has an economy based largely on national and international political activities and tourism.

**Mount Wutai (Featured Landmark)**  
This mountain in northeastern Shanxi province, northern China, is actually a cluster of flat-topped peaks, from which it takes its name, *wutai*, meaning "five terraces."

**Britannica Blog » Geography**

**The Skulls of Belgrade Cathedral (Szentendre, Hungary)**  
Dylan Thurax and Michelle Enemark - Sun, 12 Jul 2009 05:30:57 GMT

**Safari & Spa Holiday in Namibia**  
Christopher O'Toole - Fri, 10 Jul 2009 05:40:39 GMT

**Couchsurfing the World**  
Lisa Lubin - Mon, 06 Jul 2009 15:14:29 GMT

**Exploring the Jewel of Asia – Bangkok**  
Christopher O'Toole - Fri, 03 Jul 2009 05:30:04 GMT

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## Malaysia

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### Overview



Country, Southeast Asia.



It is composed of two regions—Peninsular, or West, Malaysia and East Malaysia—separated by 400 mi (640 km) of the South China Sea. West Malaysia occupies the southern half of the Malay Peninsula (Malaya) and is bordered to the north by Thailand. East Malaysia lies on the northwestern part of the island of Borneo and consists of the states of Sarawak and Sabah. Area: 127,366 sq mi (329,876 sq km). Population (2007): 26,572,000. Capitals: Kuala Lumpur/Putrajaya. Because of Malaysia's location on the heavily traveled Strait of Malacca, the population is a highly diverse mix, in which ethnic Malays and Chinese form the largest groups, and the most prominent of the smaller ethnic groups include the various indigenous peoples and South Asians. Languages: Malay (official), Chinese, and assorted Austronesian and Indo-European languages. Religions: Islam (official), Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, some local religions. Currency: ringgit. Peninsular Malaysia is largely mountainous; East Malaysia has coastal plains rising to hills and then to a mountainous core. Much of Malaysia is covered by

rainforest. Tree crops, notably rubber and palm oil, are the most important cash crops; rice is the chief staple crop. Petroleum drilling and production and tin mining are important, as is the manufacture of electronic products, rubber goods, cement, and iron and steel products. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses: the chief of state is the paramount ruler, and the head of government is the prime minister. Peninsular Malaysia has been inhabited for at least 6,000 years. Small kingdoms existed in the 2nd–3rd century CE when adventurers from India first arrived. Sumatran exiles founded the city-state of Malacca c. 1400, and it flourished as a trading and Islamic religious centre until its capture by the Portuguese in 1511. Malacca passed to the Dutch in 1641. The British founded a settlement on Singapore Island in 1819, and by 1867 they had established the Straits Settlements, including Malacca, Singapore, and Penang. During the late 19th century, Chinese began to migrate to Peninsular Malaysia (at the time called Malaya). Japan invaded Malaya in 1941 and captured Singapore in 1942. After Japan's defeat in 1945, opposition to British rule led to the creation of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in 1946, and in 1948 the peninsula was federated with Penang. Malaya gained independence from Britain in 1957. Malaya, Singapore, and the former British colonies of Sarawak and Sabah on the island of Borneo joined to form the Federation of Malaysia in 1963; Singapore, however, withdrew from the federation in 1965. Malaysia's economy expanded greatly from the late 1970s, though it experienced the regional economic slump of the mid- to late 1990s; the economy subsequently recovered.

### Profile

Official name	Malaysia
Form of government	federal constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses (Senate [701]; House of Representatives [222])
Chief of state	Paramount Ruler
Head of government	Prime Minister

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**Britannica Blog**




**Battle of Little Bighorn**  
Revisiting George Custer's final day.




**Veni, vidi, vici**



**Monaco's Son**



**Rule by the People**



**Custer's Last Stand**

**More in History & Society:**

**Buddhism (Featured Article)**  
This religion and philosophy influenced cultures across Asia, and later found adherents in the West.

**Korean War (Featured Article)**  
The effects of this conflict continue to be felt, more than half a century after the official cessation of hostilities.

**Britannica Blog » History**


**The Skulls of Belgrade Cathedral (Szentendre, Hungary)**  
Dylan Thurau and Michelle Enemark - Sun, 12 Jul 2009 05:30:57 GMT

**Michael Jackson & BDD: "Body Dysmorphic Disorder"**  
Sari Shepphird - Fri, 10 Jul 2009 19:00:47 GMT



**Planning a Staycation? (Merriam-Webster Adds 100 New Words to its Dictionary)**  
Thu, 09 Jul 2009 17:00:46 GMT


**Remembering Buckminster Fuller: Practical Utopian**  
Gregory McNamee - Thu, 09 Jul 2009 05:38:59 GMT

**Spotlights**




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Guide to Shakespeare




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**Remembering Custer's Last Stand**  
Gregory McNamee - June 25th, 2009

On June 25, 1876, George Armstrong Custer (right) and a regiment of U.S. cavalrymen entered a coulee near Montana's Little Bighorn River and there met several thousand Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, who cut them down without pity.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn—sometimes called Custer's Last Stand, particularly in older books—has become a metaphor and point of reference for other historical disasters, and it has spawned a huge literature, including Thomas Berger's grand novel *Little Big Man*, turned into a magnificent film by Arthur Penn that traded on Washita-as-My Lai themes, and Evan S. Connell's *Son of the Morning Star*, published in 1994 and perhaps the best single account of the battle yet published.

Connell closely examines Custer himself, his officers Captain Frederick Benteen and Major Marcus Reno, and their feet, among them the Sioux chiefs Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Black in the Face. He finds the whites wanting in several ways, and not for the usual reasons of current political correctness. Reno, who failed to get his column into battle in time to save Custer's command, emerges as alcoholic, cowardly and incompetent; he was dishonorably discharged soon after the battle. Benteen looked the other way whenever his troops committed an atrocity—which was often. And Connell wonders why Custer, monomaniacal, perhaps mentally ill, ever earned the fame he did: "Why he was esteemed as an Indian fighter is puzzling. None of his frontier campaigns demonstrated particular skill or insight."



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## What Makes a Good Fourth-Grade Reader? Knowledge.

Daniel Willingham - July 6th, 2009



What makes for effective reading instruction? A new study indicates that an important contributor is integrating material from other subjects into reading instruction.

An important international comparison test for reading is the PIRLS, administered to ten-year-olds. Hong Kong ranked 14th among 35 participating countries in the 2001 administration of the test. In 2006, Hong Kong students ranked second among 44 nations.

This improvement coincided with significant changes to the reading curriculum ...

» Read more of *What Makes a Good Fourth-Grade Reader? Knowledge.*

## Schoolmaster (The Britannica Blog "Guide" to Careers)

June 13th, 2009



Here's the hilarious **Rowan Atkinson** as the acerbic "molder of young minds."

Each Saturday we highlight a humorous and sometimes poignant video, interview, comic, or skit concerning different careers, past and present. From W.C. Fields to Rowan Atkinson, classic cartoons and commercials to *Monty Python*—all and everything will be tapped for this look each week at various professions and pastimes (loosely defined).

Click here for all of the videos and careers highlighted to date.

» Read more of *Schoolmaster (The Britannica Blog "Guide" to Careers)*

## "The Two Cultures" Fifty Years On: Some and None

Robert McHenry - July 8th, 2009



Fifty years ago the physicist and novelist C.P. Snow gave a lecture at the University of Cambridge that was subsequently published in a journal and then as a book under the title *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*.

His thesis was that Western culture had been evolving along two separate lines, one characterized by literature and the arts and the other by science and technology. Between these, he reported, there was a growing rift, such that not only did the typical denizen of one fail to appreciate the value of the other but was apt to disdain it and its adherents.

But there's a gap in Snow's thesis that's even more worrisome ...

» Read more of *"The Two Cultures" Fifty Years On: Some and None*

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