Fields Across Civilizations

How farmers adapted crops, land, and water

SS24.7.10b "Compare and contrast the development of agriculture in the Americas with agricultural practices in other early civilizations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways farmers in the Americas adapted farming, and circle two Egyptian farming practices. Write 1 beside the sentence that names a problem farmers in both regions faced.

Different Lands, Different Farms

1. A farmer in ancient Mesoamerica did not begin with the large ears of corn sold today. Over many generations, people in what is now Mexico saved seeds from useful wild plants and developed maize from a wild grass called teosinte. Farmers often grew maize with beans and squash. Bean plants added nutrients to the soil, while broad squash leaves shaded the ground and helped keep moisture in. This combination made a small field more productive. Farmers saved seeds again each season, slowly changing their crops through careful choices.

2. In the Andes Mountains of South America, farmers developed potatoes from wild relatives. They built terraces, flat steps cut into steep hillsides, to hold soil and water. In Egypt, farmers grew wheat and barley beside the Nile River. Yearly floods left fertile silt on nearby fields, and farmers used channels to move water to crops. Egyptian farmers could use oxen to pull plows. In the Andes, farmers worked with hand tools because they did not have large animals that could pull plows.

3. These farms solved a shared problem: how to grow enough food in places where water and soil were not always easy to manage. But their methods grew from different local conditions. Mesoamerican farmers selected maize and planted crops together, while Andean farmers shaped mountain slopes for potatoes. Egyptian farmers relied on river floods and animal-powered plows for their grains. No one method was used across all of the Americas. In each region, farmers changed plants or land over many generations, and those changes helped communities support larger populations.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Mesoamerican farmers develop maize, and how did Egyptian farmers use the Nile to help grow crops?

2. Compare how Andean and Egyptian farmers moved or held water for crops. How did the land in each place shape their methods?

3. How did Mesoamerican and Egyptian farmers each improve the soil where crops grew?

4. What difference between farming in the Andes and Egypt affected the tools farmers used?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose Mesoamerica or the Andes and compare its farming with farming in Egypt. Write one paragraph of five or six sentences that names a shared challenge, gives two differences in methods, and explains how local conditions shaped at least one method.

ANSWER KEY

Fields Across Civilizations

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.10b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways farmers in the Americas adapted farming, and circle two Egyptian farming practices. Write 1 beside the sentence that names a problem farmers in both regions faced. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Mesoamerican farmers develop maize, and how did Egyptian farmers use the Nile to help grow crops?	**Mesoamerican farmers saved seeds over generations to develop maize from teosinte. Egyptian farmers used fertile silt from Nile floods and moved water through channels.**
2	Compare how Andean and Egyptian farmers moved or held water for crops. How did the land in each place shape their methods?	**Andean farmers built terraces to hold water and soil on steep hillsides. Egyptian farmers used channels to move water from the Nile to fields beside the river.**
3	How did Mesoamerican and Egyptian farmers each improve the soil where crops grew?	**Mesoamerican farmers grew beans with maize, adding nutrients to the soil. In Egypt, Nile floods left fertile silt on fields.**
4	What difference between farming in the Andes and Egypt affected the tools farmers used?	**Egyptian farmers could use oxen to pull plows. Andean farmers used hand tools because they lacked large animals that could pull plows.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Andean and Egyptian farmers both needed good soil and enough water to raise food. In the Andes, steep hillsides led farmers to build terraces that held soil and water. Near the Nile, floods left fertile silt, and Egyptian farmers used channels to guide water. Andean farmers developed potatoes from wild relatives, while Egyptians grew wheat and barley. Egyptian farmers used oxen to pull plows, but Andean farmers used hand tools. Each region shaped farming to fit its land and available resources.

Accept other comparisons supported by the passage. For Part 3, check for five or six sentences, a shared challenge, two accurate differences, and a link between a method and local conditions.