# When Water Moves

Climate, resources, and settlement in the Sahel

**SS24.HG.10a** "Evaluate the impact of long-term climate shifts and resource usage on human migration and settlement patterns."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two long-term climate changes, circle two ways people use land or water, and number three ways people respond by moving or settling. Use your marks to compare what caused each response.

### Choices in a Drying Region

1 In the Sahel, a semiarid belt south of the Sahara, a well can help determine where a community stays. During the 1970s and 1980s, repeated droughts reduced rainfall across much of this region. In Niger, weaker rains meant smaller harvests and less grass for livestock. Some farming families moved to towns to seek wages or food, while some herding families traveled farther to find pasture and water. These moves did not all become permanent. A household might send one member to a city and keep others on its land, spreading risk instead of leaving its home completely.

2 Climate was not the only pressure. As populations grew, more land was cultivated, sometimes narrowing the routes herders used to reach seasonal grazing grounds. Farmers and herders also depended on wells and shared water sources. When many people and animals relied on a smaller area, competition for access could make a dry year harder to survive. A family with savings might buy feed or pay for transport; a family without those options might have to move sooner. Thus, the same drought could change settlement differently for households with different land rights, incomes, or access to water.

3 Rainfall improved in parts of the Sahel after the driest decades, but it remained variable, and rising temperatures can increase water loss from soil. Some migrants settled in growing towns and built lives there; others returned to rural communities or moved back and forth for work. A town can offer markets and services, yet rapid growth can strain housing and water supplies. The pattern is not a simple march away from the desert. To judge whether a settlement can last, consider rainfall over time, how land and water are used, and whether people have choices besides moving.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did drought lead some farming families and some herding families to move in different ways?

2. How could expanding farmland make a drought more difficult for herding families?

3. Why might two households facing the same drought make different decisions about leaving home?

4. Rainfall improved in parts of the Sahel. Why did that not guarantee that growing towns would be easy places to settle?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In a fictional valley, warmer winters shrink the snowpack, and new irrigation draws more river water. A nearby town has steady work but limited housing. In four or five sentences, recommend a movement or settlement plan for one farming household, explain how both changes affect it, and weigh one benefit against one cost of your plan.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HG.10a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two long-term climate changes, circle two ways people use land or water, and number three ways people respond by moving or settling. Use your marks to compare what caused each response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did drought lead some farming families and some herding families to move in different ways? | **Smaller harvests led some farming families to seek wages or food in towns. Less grass and water led some herding families to travel farther with their livestock.** |
| 2 | How could expanding farmland make a drought more difficult for herding families? | **Expanding farmland could narrow routes to seasonal grazing grounds, limiting herders' options when drought reduced grass and water.** |
| 3 | Why might two households facing the same drought make different decisions about leaving home? | **Households differed in savings, land rights, income, and water access. One might pay for feed or transport, while another might need to move sooner.** |
| 4 | Rainfall improved in parts of the Sahel. Why did that not guarantee that growing towns would be easy places to settle? | **Rainfall remained variable, and rapid town growth could strain housing and water supplies, even though towns offered markets and services.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A farming household should send one adult to work in town while the others remain in the valley for now. Warmer winters may reduce the meltwater reaching the farm, and new irrigation draws more water from the river. Town wages could help the household buy food if harvests shrink. Limited housing makes a full move risky, so the family should reconsider its plan if water shortages continue.

Accept different plans if students explain the effects of both reduced snowpack and increased irrigation use. Responses should identify a plausible benefit and cost of the proposed movement or settlement choice.