

Rivers Build Civilizations

Trace how river valley environments shaped early societies.

SS.6.G.2.3 "Analyze the relationship of physical geography to the development of ancient river valley civilizations."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each detail about a physical feature of a river valley. Circle the nearby words that show how people used that feature or responded to it.

Life Along Ancient Rivers

- ① Long ago, people often settled beside rivers because water shaped daily life. In Mesopotamia, the Tigris and Euphrates flowed across a flat plain. Seasonal floods left rich silt, so farmers could grow barley and wheat. Rivers also supplied drinking water and routes for boats carrying crops and clay goods. Yet the floods could arrive suddenly and change course. To protect fields and guide water, communities dug canals and built levees. Managing these projects required workers, leaders, and shared rules.
- ② Along the Nile in ancient Egypt, annual flooding was usually more predictable than flooding in Mesopotamia. Farmers planted after the water pulled back and used moist soil for crops. The river ran through a dry desert, which helped separate Egypt from some invaders. Boats moved people and stone between settlements. Because most farmland lay near the Nile, towns and government centers grew along its banks. Egyptians also built basins and channels to store and direct floodwater for dry months.
- ③ Farther east, the Indus River supported cities such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. Its water helped farmers raise crops on nearby plains, while river routes connected settlements. In China, people farmed beside the Huang He, or Yellow River. Loess soil made the land fertile, but the river's heavy silt could raise its bed and worsen floods. People built dikes and canals, yet flooding remained dangerous. In each river valley, physical features created opportunities for food, travel, and trade, while also demanding organized responses to hazards.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the flat plain and rich silt of Mesopotamia support farming?

2 Why did Mesopotamian communities need workers, leaders, and shared rules?

3 How did the Nile's predictable floods and the nearby desert each help ancient Egypt develop?

4 What problem did heavy silt create along the Huang He, and what did people build in response?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Invent a river valley civilization. Write three sentences that name one physical feature, explain one way it could help people develop farming, travel, or trade, and explain one challenge and response.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each detail about a physical feature of a river valley. Circle the nearby words that show how people used that feature or responded to it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the flat plain and rich silt of Mesopotamia support farming?	Seasonal floods left rich silt on the flat plain, allowing farmers to grow barley and wheat.
2	Why did Mesopotamian communities need workers, leaders, and shared rules?	They needed to organize canal and levee projects that protected fields and guided water.
3	How did the Nile's predictable floods and the nearby desert each help ancient Egypt develop?	Predictable floods let farmers plant in moist soil after the water receded. The desert helped separate Egypt from some invaders.
4	What problem did heavy silt create along the Huang He, and what did people build in response?	Heavy silt could raise the riverbed and worsen floods. People built dikes and canals.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The River Sela flooded a wide plain and left fertile soil for farmers. Villages traded grain by boat, so a market town grew beside the river. When spring floods threatened homes, leaders organized workers to build raised banks.

Accept answers that accurately connect a physical feature to a benefit, challenge, or human response described in the passage. For the open task, look for all three required parts and a logical cause-and-effect relationship.