

River City Choices

Use geographic evidence to connect past decisions, current risks, and future plans.

SS.8.G.6 "Understand how to apply geography to interpret the past and present and plan for the future."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each sentence that explains how land or water shaped a decision or risk, then label it P for past, N for now, or F for future.

New Orleans and Its Waterways

- ① New Orleans was founded in 1718 beside a bend in the Mississippi River. The site stood near the river's natural levee, a slightly higher ridge built by repeated floods. French leaders valued the location because ships could move goods between the river and the Gulf of Mexico. The same geography brought danger. Low areas behind the ridge collected water, while hurricanes could push storm surge toward the city. Early residents raised buildings and used drainage canals, showing that settlement choices responded to both trade routes and hazards.
- ② Today, much of New Orleans lies at or below sea level because of its low elevation and subsidence, the sinking of land over time. Levees, pumps, and floodwalls reduce everyday flooding, but they require careful maintenance. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused levee and floodwall failures in several places, and flooding devastated many neighborhoods. Coastal wetlands south of the city can weaken storm surge, yet wetland loss reduces that protection. Current risk is therefore shaped by physical geography and by human-built systems.
- ③ Future planning uses these geographic patterns. Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan supports projects such as restoring wetlands, raising homes, and improving flood protection. Some projects direct Mississippi River sediment into nearby basins to build land, but they can also affect fisheries and communities. Planners must compare where people live, which land is sinking, and how water moves during storms. They also use climate projections, because sea-level rise can increase flood risk. Geographic evidence helps leaders choose actions that protect residents while considering costs and environmental effects.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the Mississippi River's location help explain why French leaders valued the New Orleans site?

2 Explain how low elevation and subsidence increase New Orleans's flood risk today.

3 What did Hurricane Katrina reveal about the relationship between human-built systems and flood risk?

4 Choose one future planning action from the passage. What geographic problem would that action address?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a real community other than New Orleans that you know or can name. Write exactly six sentences explaining one geographic feature, how it shaped the community in the past, one benefit or hazard it creates today, and one future planning action that could help.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each sentence that explains how land or water shaped a decision or risk, then label it P for past, N for now, or F for future. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Mississippi River's location help explain why French leaders valued the New Orleans site?	Ships could move goods between the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, making the site useful for trade.
2	Explain how low elevation and subsidence increase New Orleans's flood risk today.	Much of the city is low or below sea level, and subsidence makes the land sink over time, so water can more easily flood low areas.
3	What did Hurricane Katrina reveal about the relationship between human-built systems and flood risk?	Levee and floodwall failures in several places allowed flooding that devastated many neighborhoods, showing that built protections can fail.
4	Choose one future planning action from the passage. What geographic problem would that action address?	Answers may include restoring wetlands to weaken storm surge, raising homes to reduce flood damage, improving flood protection, or using sediment to build sinking land.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Davenport, Iowa, stands beside the Mississippi River. Its river location helped it grow as a transportation and trade center. Today, the river supports recreation and business, but seasonal flooding can threaten low-lying areas. City planners can use floodplain information to decide where new buildings should go. They could keep more open parkland near the river and raise or protect important structures. These choices would reduce flood damage while preserving access to the river.

Accept answers that accurately connect a geographic feature to a past development, a present condition, and a reasonable future action. For the open task, accept any real community and any logical evidence-based planning choice.