

Water Shapes Routes

Read how deserts and rivers guide settlement and trade in Southwest Asia.

SS7G7.a "Describe how the deserts and rivers of Southwest Asia (Middle East) impact trade and affect where people live."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each phrase that shows how a river affects where people live or trade. Circle each phrase that shows how a desert affects where people live or trade.

Water, Land, and Exchange

- ① Southwest Asia contains wide deserts, including the Arabian Desert and the Syrian Desert. These dry regions have little rainfall, scarce fresh water, and long distances between reliable wells. For much of history, deserts made travel slow and risky. Caravans carried goods such as incense, spices, and textiles along routes that linked oasis towns. An oasis, where water reaches the surface, could support travelers, animals, and trade. Settlements often grew near oases because people needed dependable water for drinking and farming.
- ② Rivers created a different pattern. The Tigris and Euphrates supplied water to parts of Iraq, and the Jordan River supplied water to nearby communities. River water allowed irrigation, the moving of water onto fields, so farmers could grow crops in otherwise dry land. Cities and villages developed beside rivers because water supported homes, farms, and livestock. Rivers also acted as travel corridors. Boats could carry heavy goods, while river valleys offered routes with more water and food than the surrounding desert.
- ③ Deserts did not stop trade, but they shaped it. Merchants planned trips from one water source to another and used camels, which could travel for days with little water. Some desert routes connected Southwest Asia to Africa, Europe, and Asia, making oasis towns important stopping places. Rivers connected inland settlements to one another and, in some places, to seas. However, rivers could flood, and desert heat could harm travelers. People chose places to live by weighing water, fertile soil, safety, and access to trade routes.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 How did oasis towns support both desert trade and settlement?

2 Why did cities and villages often develop beside rivers?

3 How were rivers useful for moving trade goods differently from deserts?

4 Name one danger of river travel or living near a river and one danger of desert travel.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Imagine that you are choosing a site for a new Southwest Asian settlement that needs farming and trade. Write exactly three sentences that choose a riverbank or an oasis, explain two benefits, and name one challenge people would need to plan for.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each phrase that shows how a river affects where people live or trade. Circle each phrase that shows how a desert affects where people live or trade. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did oasis towns support both desert trade and settlement?	Oasis towns gave travelers and animals water and stopping places for trade. People also settled near them because they needed water for drinking and farming.
2	Why did cities and villages often develop beside rivers?	Rivers supplied water for homes, farms, and livestock. Their water also allowed irrigation so farmers could grow crops.
3	How were rivers useful for moving trade goods differently from deserts?	Boats on rivers could carry heavy goods. Desert merchants traveled between water sources, often using camels and caravan routes.
4	Name one danger of river travel or living near a river and one danger of desert travel.	Rivers could flood. Desert heat could harm travelers.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would build near a riverbank because the river could water fields and provide a route for boats carrying goods. The settlement could grow food and trade with other river communities. Flooding could damage homes, so people should build on higher ground near the river.

Accept equivalent evidence-based explanations from the passage. For the open response, accept either location if the student gives two accurate benefits and one realistic challenge connected to rivers or deserts.