Where Water Goes

Follow freshwater from mountain slopes to communities

5.G.3 "Locate the continental divide, the major drainage basins/watersheds, major sources of freshwater in the United States, and identify their impact on local and regional communities."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the Continental Divide and each named river basin or lake region, then circle ways freshwater affects communities.

A Drop's Long Journey

1. Picture a drop of rain landing high in the Rocky Mountains. The Continental Divide follows high ground through the western United States. Water on its eastern side generally flows toward the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico. Water on its western side generally flows toward the Pacific Ocean. A drop that lands near the divide can end up in a different ocean depending on which slope it falls.

2. In the central United States, streams feed the Missouri River, which joins the Mississippi River. This huge drainage basin, an area of land whose water flows into one river system, reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Farmers in the basin use river water to grow crops, and towns treat it for drinking. Heavy rain upstream can raise river levels downstream, so communities also plan for floods.

3. Other watersheds carry water in different directions. In the Northwest, the Columbia River basin drains toward the Pacific Ocean. Its rivers supply water for farms and power plants that make electricity. Farther east, the Great Lakes hold a large supply of freshwater. They drain through the St. Lawrence River toward the Atlantic Ocean. Lakeside communities use lake water for drinking and need to keep pollution out.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Where is the Continental Divide, and how can the side on which rain falls change where the water goes?

2. Trace water from the Missouri River to the coast. Name one way people in that drainage basin depend on the water.

3. Where is the Columbia River basin, where does its water go, and how does it help nearby communities?

4. Trace water from the Great Lakes toward the ocean. Why do lakeside communities need to keep pollution out?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new town sits beside a small stream that feeds the Missouri River. Write three sentences that trace where its water can travel, name one way the town could use this freshwater, and suggest a specific action to protect people or water downstream. Explain why your action helps.

ANSWER KEY

Where Water Goes

GRADE 5 · 5.G.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the Continental Divide and each named river basin or lake region, then circle ways freshwater affects communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Where is the Continental Divide, and how can the side on which rain falls change where the water goes?	**It follows high ground through the western United States. Rain on its eastern side generally flows toward the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico, while rain on its western side generally flows toward the Pacific Ocean.**
2	Trace water from the Missouri River to the coast. Name one way people in that drainage basin depend on the water.	**The Missouri joins the Mississippi, which reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Farmers use the water for crops, or towns treat it for drinking.**
3	Where is the Columbia River basin, where does its water go, and how does it help nearby communities?	**The basin is in the Northwest and drains toward the Pacific Ocean. Its rivers supply water for farms or power plants that make electricity.**
4	Trace water from the Great Lakes toward the ocean. Why do lakeside communities need to keep pollution out?	**Water drains through the St. Lawrence River toward the Atlantic Ocean. Lakeside communities use lake water for drinking.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Water from our town's stream enters the Missouri River, then the Mississippi River, and finally the Gulf of Mexico. Our town could treat stream water so people can drink it. We could plant grasses along the stream to hold soil in place, helping keep muddy runoff out of the rivers downstream.

Accept other passage-supported water uses and a specific, reasonable action with an explanation of how it protects people or water downstream. The open response should contain exactly three sentences.