River City Choices

How location shapes trade and flood safety

4.P.2.3 "Demonstrate a mastery of geographic concepts and the use of geographic tools to understand the impact of geography on the past and present..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show where places are in relation to the river or Gulf. Circle two details that show how those locations affect what people do or how safe they are.

New Orleans and the Mississippi

1 New Orleans grew beside the Mississippi River, about 100 miles upriver from the Gulf of Mexico. In the 1700s, boats could carry goods downriver from inland farms. Ships from the Gulf could also reach the city. Traders met where these travel routes connected. The river's location helped the city become a busy port, a place where goods are loaded and unloaded.

2 Living beside the river brought danger, too. When the Mississippi flooded, water could spread across the low, flat land nearby. Some early residents built homes on slightly higher ground along the river's edge. Over time, people built levees, raised banks that help hold river water back. Levees reduced many floods, but building farther into low areas left more homes at risk if flood barriers failed.

3 Today, barges still move grain down the Mississippi from farms farther north. At the port, workers can transfer grain to large ships bound for the Gulf. Levees and other flood barriers protect much of New Orleans. Yet the city's low ground can still flood when barriers fail. During Hurricane Katrina in 2005, storm surge from the Gulf caused flood barriers to fail, and many neighborhoods flooded.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did New Orleans's location help it become a trading port in the 1700s?

2. Why did some early residents build on higher ground along the river's edge?

3. Trace the path grain can take today from farms north of New Orleans to the Gulf. Where can it change vessels?

4. Why can low neighborhoods flood even though New Orleans has flood barriers?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town with a low riverbank and a broad ridge above it. In four sentences, place homes and a boat landing, explain how the river could have helped traders long ago, and describe a present-day way to reduce flood damage.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 4 · 4.P.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show where places are in relation to the river or Gulf. Circle two details that show how those locations affect what people do or how safe they are. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did New Orleans's location help it become a trading port in the 1700s?	**Riverboats carrying goods from inland farms could meet ships arriving from the Gulf at New Orleans.**
2	Why did some early residents build on higher ground along the river's edge?	**Floodwater could spread across the low, flat land, so higher ground offered more protection.**
3	Trace the path grain can take today from farms north of New Orleans to the Gulf. Where can it change vessels?	**Barges carry grain down the Mississippi to the New Orleans port, where workers can move it to large ships bound for the Gulf.**
4	Why can low neighborhoods flood even though New Orleans has flood barriers?	**If flood barriers fail, water can reach the city's low ground, as it did during Hurricane Katrina.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would build homes on the broad ridge above the low riverbank. I would put the boat landing beside the river so boats can stop there. Long ago, traders could have used boats to bring crops from towns upstream. Today, the town could keep new buildings off the low riverbank to reduce flood damage.

Accept other accurate explanations that connect the river, Gulf, or low ground to trade or flooding. For Part 3, accept a different flood-safety plan if the student explains how the town's locations make it useful.