River Land Choices

How the Mississippi River shapes where people live

5.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 physical features and circle two human choices they helped shape. Write matching numbers beside each feature and choice to show the connections.

Living Along the Mississippi

1. The Mississippi River winds south through the United States to the Gulf of Mexico. Near the river, flat land called a floodplain lies lower than many nearby hills. During floods, river water can spread across this land and leave behind rich soil. People built farms and towns there because the soil helped crops grow and boats could carry goods along the river.

2. In 1927, weeks of heavy rain filled the Mississippi River and its branches. Levees, raised walls of earth built beside the river, broke in several places. Water spread across parts of the floodplain, flooding farms and towns in the lower Mississippi Valley. Many people had to leave their homes. The same flat land that made farming easier also let floodwater travel far.

3. Today, levees still stand between many communities and the river. They can lower the risk of flooding in protected areas, but they do not stop every flood. Levees also keep some river mud from reaching nearby wetlands. Without fresh mud to build up their land, some wetlands near the Gulf may shrink. People must weigh flood protection against changes to the land around them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did people build farms and towns on the floodplain, even though it could flood?

2. How did the shape of the land make the 1927 flood especially harmful to farms and towns?

3. How could river mud help a farm on the floodplain but be kept from a wetland today?

4. Why might a community near wetlands have mixed feelings about levees?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are planning a new town near a river with higher ground, a flat floodplain, and wetlands nearby. In three sentences, choose where to put homes, explain how the land affects flood risk, and describe one trade-off of building a levee.

ANSWER KEY

River Land Choices

GRADE 5 · 5.P.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two physical features and circle two human choices they helped shape. Write matching numbers beside each feature and choice to show the connections. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did people build farms and towns on the floodplain, even though it could flood?	**The river left rich soil for crops, and boats could carry goods, but the flat floodplain could also fill with water.**
2	How did the shape of the land make the 1927 flood especially harmful to farms and towns?	**When levees broke, floodwater spread far across the flat floodplain where people had built farms and towns.**
3	How could river mud help a farm on the floodplain but be kept from a wetland today?	**Floodwater could leave rich soil on farmland, while levees now keep some river mud from reaching nearby wetlands.**
4	Why might a community near wetlands have mixed feelings about levees?	**Levees can lower flood risk for the community, but they can also block mud that helps nearby wetlands build up their land.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would put homes on higher ground and keep fields closer to the river. Floodwater could spread across the flat fields, but the higher homes would be less likely to flood. A levee might protect the fields, yet it could keep river mud from reaching nearby wetlands.

Accept other choices of location if students explain flood risk using the land features. The levee trade-off should include both flood protection and an effect on where river mud goes.