Where Cultures Grow

Rivers, trade routes, and the legacies of cultural hearths

7.C.5.2 "Define and describe the legacy of the world's major cultural hearths on a region's ethnic heritage and history. Examine how and why major cultural hearths developed along major river valleys and crossroads of trade (e.g...."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline ways rivers helped settlements grow, circle examples of writing or government, and label one trade connection T and one lasting cultural influence L.

Rivers and Routes

1 A cultural hearth is a place where ways of life develop and spread. In Mesopotamia, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers watered fields, but floods could be unpredictable. Farmers dug canals to move water to crops. As harvests grew, cities formed, and people developed cuneiform writing to record goods and laws to settle disputes. The Nile flooded more regularly, leaving rich soil. Egyptian rulers organized farming and building projects, while scribes kept written records. These river societies left stories and ideas about government that later communities adapted.

2 In South Asia, communities along the Indus River built cities with planned streets and drainage systems. River water supported farming, and routes across the region connected settlements to distant traders. The Indus people used a system of signs, but scholars have not fully read it, so much about their government remains uncertain. In China, early communities farmed near the Huang He and along the Yangtze. Rivers supplied water and transport, but floods also threatened homes. Over time, Chinese societies developed writing and organized governments whose practices influenced later generations.

3 A cultural hearth can also grow where trade routes meet. In West Africa, towns near the Niger River connected farmers, fishers, and traders crossing the Sahara. The kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai grew powerful partly by controlling trade in gold and salt. Under Mali, Timbuktu became a center of trade and Islamic learning; scholars copied and studied books there. Traders and teachers spread Islam and Arabic, while local languages and customs continued. This mix shaped the region's ethnic heritage, including traditions passed through families, and its history of scholarship and exchange.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did river conditions affect farming in Mesopotamia and along the Nile?

2. What features of complex societies did both Mesopotamia and Egypt develop? Give one example from each place.

3. How did rivers help communities in both South Asia and China grow? What does the passage say is still uncertain about the Indus people?

4. How did trade help Mali grow, and how did people connected through trade shape the region's ethnic heritage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a settlement where a river meets a land trade route. In four sentences, explain why it grows, name two features of a complex society it develops, and describe one way its culture could shape the heritage of later communities.

ANSWER KEY

Where Cultures Grow

GRADE 7 · 7.C.5.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline ways rivers helped settlements grow, circle examples of writing or government, and label one trade connection T and one lasting cultural influence L. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did river conditions affect farming in Mesopotamia and along the Nile?	**Mesopotamia's unpredictable floods led farmers to dig canals to move water to crops. The Nile's more regular floods left rich soil for farming.**
2	What features of complex societies did both Mesopotamia and Egypt develop? Give one example from each place.	**Both developed written records and organized government. Mesopotamians used cuneiform to record goods, while Egyptian scribes kept records.**
3	How did rivers help communities in both South Asia and China grow? What does the passage say is still uncertain about the Indus people?	**Rivers supported farming in both regions. Much about Indus government remains uncertain because scholars have not fully read the people's signs.**
4	How did trade help Mali grow, and how did people connected through trade shape the region's ethnic heritage?	**Mali grew powerful partly by controlling gold and salt trade. Traders and teachers spread Islam and Arabic, which became part of the region's heritage alongside local languages and customs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the meeting of the Silver River and a mountain trade path, families grow beans in irrigated fields and sell pottery to travelers. As the town grows, leaders set rules for sharing water. Clerks create written records of trades. Generations later, nearby communities still use the town's pottery patterns in family celebrations.

Accept other passage-supported comparisons and examples. For Your Turn, look for a clear reason the settlement grows, two distinct features of a complex society, and a plausible cultural legacy.