A City on Water

How a lagoon shaped Venice's choices and history

7.P.2.3.C "Explain how the environment affects cultural patterns and historical events, providing opportunities and challenges for human development."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two features of the lagoon that offered opportunities, circle two environmental challenges, and number two ways people responded. Use your marks to trace how the setting shaped Venice's history and culture.

Living in the Venetian Lagoon

1. Imagine arriving at a cluster of islands in a shallow lagoon on Italy's Adriatic coast. During the early Middle Ages, people moved into this area as warfare made nearby mainland settlements less secure. The muddy, shallow water made it difficult for large attacking armies to reach the islands. This setting helped Venice grow into a city, but it created a problem: salty lagoon water was not safe to drink. Residents collected rainwater and filtered it through sand into underground cisterns to supply fresh water.

2. The lagoon also shaped daily life. Boats carried people and goods along canals where streets could not run. Bridges linked some islands, while skilled builders made ships for voyages across the Adriatic and Mediterranean seas. Access to sea routes gave Venetian merchants opportunities to trade goods with distant ports. Over time, shipbuilding and travel by water became familiar parts of the city's culture. Yet the same waterways that supported commerce sometimes brought high tides into streets and buildings, interrupting work and travel.

3. In November 1966, an unusually severe flood covered much of Venice. Salt water damaged buildings and works of art, turning a familiar environmental challenge into a major historical event. People repaired damaged structures and continued to search for ways to protect the city. In 2020, Venice began using movable barriers at the lagoon's entrances to hold back some high tides. The barriers show how people can respond to environmental risks, but they do not remove every threat, including rising sea levels and the gradual wear of buildings.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the shallow lagoon affect Venice's growth during the early Middle Ages?

2. How did salty lagoon water change the way residents got drinking water?

3. Explain how access to sea routes helped shape both Venice's economy and its culture.

4. How did flooding in 1966 reveal a challenge of Venice's setting, and how did people later respond?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new settlement in a mountain valley with a fast stream, steep slopes, and snowy winters. In four or five sentences, explain how this setting could create an opportunity, a challenge, a cultural practice, and an event in the settlement's history; include how people respond to the event.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 7 · 7.P.2.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two features of the lagoon that offered opportunities, circle two environmental challenges, and number two ways people responded. Use your marks to trace how the setting shaped Venice's history and culture. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the shallow lagoon affect Venice's growth during the early Middle Ages?	**Its shallow water made the islands harder for large attacking armies to reach, helping people settle there when warfare made the mainland less secure.**
2	How did salty lagoon water change the way residents got drinking water?	**Because lagoon water was not safe to drink, residents collected rainwater and filtered it through sand into underground cisterns.**
3	Explain how access to sea routes helped shape both Venice's economy and its culture.	**Sea routes let merchants trade with distant ports. Shipbuilding and travel by water became familiar parts of Venetian culture.**
4	How did flooding in 1966 reveal a challenge of Venice's setting, and how did people later respond?	**The severe flood brought salt water into the city and damaged buildings and art. People repaired structures, and Venice later began using movable barriers to hold back some high tides.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The fast stream could turn a mill that grinds grain for nearby farms. Families might hold a yearly meal after the grain harvest, making farming part of local culture. One snowy winter, an avalanche could block the only road into the valley. Without deliveries, residents would face a shortage of supplies. After the road reopened, they could store extra food each autumn and agree to share it during future closures.

Accept responses that connect a specific environmental feature to an opportunity, a challenge, a cultural practice, and a historical event. The proposed response to the event should address the challenge described.