A River Remade

Weighing the reach of the Aswan High Dam

AWH.P.2.3.C "Evaluate the extent to which political and economic decisions have had significant impact on human and physical environments of various places and regions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the government's goals for the dam, circle two changes to land or water, and number two effects on people in different places to trace how one decision reached across the region.

The Aswan High Dam's Uneven Reach

1. In the 1960s, Egypt's government built the Aswan High Dam across the Nile, with financial and technical help from the Soviet Union. Leaders wanted a steady water supply for farming, protection from destructive floods, and electricity for a growing economy. Completed in 1970, the dam held back water to form Lake Nasser, a vast reservoir extending into Sudan. Its turbines generated electricity for homes and industry. Farmers below the dam could irrigate crops through more of the year instead of relying so heavily on the river's seasonal flood. These gains reached communities far beyond the construction site.

2. The reservoir also covered villages and farmland where Nubian communities had lived for generations. Tens of thousands of people in Egypt and Sudan were moved, often far from familiar homes and riverbank fields. Some ancient temples, including Abu Simbel, were relocated to higher ground, but entire living landscapes could not be moved. Downstream, controlled river flow reduced the danger of severe floods to settlements and fields. Yet irrigation without the old annual floods contributed to waterlogging and salt buildup in some farmland. For those farmers, a dependable water supply came with new costs to manage.

3. The dam also trapped much of the Nile's sediment in the reservoir. Before the dam, floods carried that material to fields and the Nile Delta, where the river meets the Mediterranean Sea. With less fresh sediment reaching the delta, coastal erosion became a greater problem, and farmers lost a natural source of soil nutrients. Some relied more on manufactured fertilizer. The dam brought substantial benefits in electricity, irrigation, and flood control, but its effects were uneven across places. A city using electricity, a displaced Nubian family, and a delta farmer could judge its success very differently.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. To what extent did the dam improve conditions for people downstream? Use one benefit and one cost from the passage.

2. Which communities experienced the clearest loss of homes because of the dam? How does that loss affect an evaluation of the dam?

3. How did the dam's effect on sediment change both the Nile Delta's physical environment and farmers' economic choices?

4. A leader claims the dam affected only the area beside it. Evaluate this claim using evidence from two different places.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Egypt can fund one new response to the dam: improve drainage on irrigated farmland or add sediment to eroding parts of the Nile Delta. Choose one and write 4 to 5 sentences predicting a benefit for people, a change to the physical environment, and one limit of your plan. Support your evaluation with two facts from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.P.2.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the government's goals for the dam, circle two changes to land or water, and number two effects on people in different places to trace how one decision reached across the region. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	To what extent did the dam improve conditions for people downstream? Use one benefit and one cost from the passage.	**It brought major benefits, such as reduced flood danger and more dependable irrigation, but waterlogging and salt buildup created costs for some farmers.**
2	Which communities experienced the clearest loss of homes because of the dam? How does that loss affect an evaluation of the dam?	**Nubian communities in Egypt and Sudan lost villages beneath the reservoir. Their displacement was a major human cost, even though the dam benefited other communities.**
3	How did the dam's effect on sediment change both the Nile Delta's physical environment and farmers' economic choices?	**With less sediment reaching the delta, coastal erosion became a greater problem. Farmers lost a source of soil nutrients, and some relied more on manufactured fertilizer.**
4	A leader claims the dam affected only the area beside it. Evaluate this claim using evidence from two different places.	**The claim is false. The reservoir covered Nubian villages in Egypt and Sudan, while reduced sediment made coastal erosion a greater problem in the Nile Delta.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would fund better drainage on irrigated farms. The dam made irrigation possible through more of the year, but some fields now have waterlogged, salty soil. Drainage could move excess water away and make those fields more productive for farmers. It would not replace the sediment trapped behind the dam or stop erosion along the Nile Delta coast. My plan would address a serious local problem but not the dam's wider physical effects.

Accept supported judgments that weigh benefits against costs rather than treating every place as affected equally. For Part 3, accept either project if the predicted effects and stated limit are reasonable and grounded in two passage facts.