Dam Decisions

Weigh the benefits and costs of changing the Nile.

MWH.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 decisions about the dam, circle effects on people, and number effects on land or water. Use your marks to judge how widely the decisions changed each environment.

The Nile After the Aswan High Dam

1 Egypt's government chose to build the Aswan High Dam across the Nile, completing it in 1970. Leaders wanted reliable water for farms, electricity for industry, and protection from dangerous floods. Soviet aid helped pay for and build the project. The dam created a reservoir called Lake Nasser in Egypt and Lake Nubia in Sudan. This water supply lets Egypt release water during dry months and reduce floods downstream. The choice changed the Nile from a river with powerful seasonal surges into one whose flow Egypt could regulate. It also made upstream communities bear costs they had not chosen.

2 As water rose behind the dam, it covered Nubian villages and farmland in southern Egypt and northern Sudan. Governments relocated tens of thousands of Nubians, often to places far from their former homes and ancestral sites. Some families gained new houses or services, but many lost familiar farming conditions and community ties. Downstream, steadier irrigation allowed farmers to grow more crops and helped supply food and income. Hydroelectric power supported homes and factories, though its share of Egypt's electricity later declined as demand grew. The gains reached millions, while displaced families carried especially deep local losses.

3 Before the dam, seasonal floods spread fertile silt across fields and carried sediment to the Nile Delta. Now much of that sediment settles in the reservoir. Farmers downstream rely more on manufactured fertilizer, and less new sediment reaches the delta, where coastal erosion threatens farmland and settlements. Water lost to evaporation from the vast reservoir also reduces the amount available downstream. At the same time, flood control protects towns and fields from many destructive high-water years. Across Egypt and Sudan, the project brought broad benefits in water and power, but its effects on villages and the delta show that national gains did not erase severe local costs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How extensive were the dam's benefits for people downstream? Use two effects from the passage to support your judgment.

2. How severe was the impact on relocated Nubian communities? Weigh a possible gain against two losses described in the passage.

3. To what extent did the dam reshape physical environments both upstream and downstream? Give one effect in each area.

4. Were the dam's benefits and costs shared equally across the region? Support your judgment with one group that gained and one that faced a cost.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a council is deciding whether to build a dam on another river. In one paragraph, recommend two conditions it should require before approval. Explain how each condition would reduce a human or physical cost from the passage while preserving a benefit.

ANSWER KEY

Dam Decisions

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.P.2.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline decisions about the dam, circle effects on people, and number effects on land or water. Use your marks to judge how widely the decisions changed each environment. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How extensive were the dam's benefits for people downstream? Use two effects from the passage to support your judgment.	**The benefits were broad: steadier irrigation helped farmers grow more crops, and hydroelectric power served homes and factories.**
2	How severe was the impact on relocated Nubian communities? Weigh a possible gain against two losses described in the passage.	**Some families gained houses or services, but relocation took them far from ancestral sites and disrupted familiar farming conditions and community ties.**
3	To what extent did the dam reshape physical environments both upstream and downstream? Give one effect in each area.	**The changes were extensive. Upstream, the reservoir covered villages and farmland; downstream, less sediment reached the delta, contributing to coastal erosion.**
4	Were the dam's benefits and costs shared equally across the region? Support your judgment with one group that gained and one that faced a cost.	**No. Downstream farmers gained steadier irrigation, while Nubian communities in Egypt and Sudan lost homes, farmland, or ancestral sites to the reservoir.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would approve the new dam only if its builders first agreed with affected families on replacement farmland near their communities and paid for relocation. This could reduce the loss of livelihoods and social ties while the dam still supplies steady water. I would also require regular checks of downstream sediment and a funded plan to protect vulnerable shores. That condition could limit erosion without giving up flood control and electricity.

Accept different judgments when students support them with accurate evidence from the passage. For Your Turn, look for two distinct, workable conditions linked to costs and benefits.