A River Remade

Weigh the reach of decisions about the Nile.

USH.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 two decisions about the Nile, circle two effects on people, and number three effects on land or water. Use your marks to judge how far the decisions' impacts reached.

The Aswan High Dam and Its Reach

1 In the 1960s, Egypt's government built the Aswan High Dam across the Nile, completing it in 1970. Leaders wanted to control dangerous floods, store water for dry years, and produce electricity for a growing economy. The dam created Lake Nasser, a vast reservoir that reaches into Sudan. By controlling the flow of water, officials could send irrigation water to farms throughout the year rather than depend on the river's seasonal rise. Farmers in the Nile Valley could grow more crops, and households and factories gained power. This single political decision reshaped how people used the river across Egypt.

2 The gains came with unequal costs. As Lake Nasser filled, rising water covered villages and farmland upstream of the dam. Tens of thousands of Nubian people in Egypt and Sudan had to move to new settlements. Families lost homes and nearby farmland, and many were separated from places central to their history and culture. At the same time, year-round irrigation helped farmers in the Nile Valley produce crops more reliably. Yet water left on fields can evaporate, leaving salts in the soil if drainage is poor. The benefits to agriculture therefore depended partly on later choices about managing irrigation and drainage.

3 Downstream, the dam traps much of the sediment that once traveled toward the Nile Delta. Before the dam, floodwaters deposited this material on fields and along the coast. With less new sediment, parts of the delta coast have eroded, and farmers need more fertilizer to replace nutrients once delivered by floods. Water taken for irrigation also reduces freshwater reaching some delta channels, allowing salty seawater to move into delta soils and threaten crops. Flood control and reliable water brought major benefits, but the dam's effects reached far beyond the dam site. Its impact on people and land was large, uneven, and shaped by later water decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the decision to build the dam affect Nubian communities near Lake Nasser? Explain why this was a significant human impact.

2. How did year-round irrigation affect both farmers and soil in the Nile Valley? What later decision could influence whether farmers kept the benefits?

3. Why did building the dam have physical effects in the Nile Delta, far from the dam itself? Include one effect on people there.

4. How significant were the dam's impacts across the regions in the passage? Support your judgment with one benefit and one cost from different regions.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Egypt limits water taken for farms so more freshwater reaches the Nile Delta. In 4 to 5 sentences, predict an effect on people in the Nile Valley and an effect on the physical environment in the Delta, then judge how significant this trade-off might be using evidence from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.2.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two decisions about the Nile, circle two effects on people, and number three effects on land or water. Use your marks to judge how far the decisions' impacts reached. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the decision to build the dam affect Nubian communities near Lake Nasser? Explain why this was a significant human impact.	**The reservoir covered villages and farmland, forcing tens of thousands of Nubian people in Egypt and Sudan to move. Families lost homes, land, and connections to places important to their culture.**
2	How did year-round irrigation affect both farmers and soil in the Nile Valley? What later decision could influence whether farmers kept the benefits?	**Reliable water helped farmers grow more crops, but poor drainage could leave salts in the soil. Decisions about irrigation and drainage could affect whether farmland remained productive.**
3	Why did building the dam have physical effects in the Nile Delta, far from the dam itself? Include one effect on people there.	**The dam trapped sediment that had traveled downstream. With less sediment, parts of the delta coast eroded, and farmers needed more fertilizer to replace nutrients once brought by floods.**
4	How significant were the dam's impacts across the regions in the passage? Support your judgment with one benefit and one cost from different regions.	**Its impacts were major and uneven. Farmers in the Nile Valley gained reliable irrigation, while Nubian communities near Lake Nasser lost villages and farmland to the reservoir.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Farmers in the Nile Valley might have less water for their crops. More freshwater reaching the Nile Delta could help keep salty seawater out of its soils. This trade-off could be significant because year-round irrigation has helped Valley farmers grow more crops, while salt threatens crops in the Delta. The change would not replace the sediment trapped by the dam.

Accept supported judgments that weigh benefits against costs across regions. For Your Turn, accept reasonable predictions that distinguish effects on people from effects on land or water.