A Sea Divided

Use geographic evidence to weigh decisions about water.

USH.P.2.3 "Demonstrate a mastery of geographic concepts and the use of geographic tools to understand the impact of geography on the past and present. Actively engage in asking and answering geographic questions by acquiring, organizing..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two changes shown by maps or images, circle the decisions that affected water, and label one benefit B and one cost C. Use your marks to connect decisions with changes in places.

What Happened to the Aral Sea?

1. In Central Asia, the Aral Sea once received water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers. Beginning in the 1960s, Soviet planners expanded irrigation canals to grow cotton and other crops. Farms gained water, but much less river water reached the sea. A historical survey map and later satellite images offer evidence of the change.

2. The table pairs views of the sea with land-use maps, so changes in water can be compared with changes in farming. These sources show where water retreated and where irrigated fields spread, but they cannot, by themselves, measure every canal's flow. Dates matter too: a late-summer image may differ from a spring image.

CHANGES AROUND THE ARAL SEA

Year	View of the sea	Land-use map
1960	Survey map: one connected sea	Irrigated fields along the rivers
2000	Satellite image: northern and southern waters separated	More irrigated fields along the rivers
2014	Late-summer satellite image: eastern basin appears dry	Extensive irrigated fields along the rivers

3. As the shoreline retreated, former fishing ports were left far from water, and exposed lakebed sent salt and dust into the air. Irrigated fields produced crops, so the decision brought benefits and costs. In 2005, Kazakhstan completed a dam that helped raise water levels in the North Aral Sea, but it did not restore the whole lake.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare the 1960 and 2000 entries. What changed in both the sea and land use, and what decision helps explain the pattern?

2. Which two kinds of mapped evidence would you compare to investigate whether expanding farms coincided with the sea's retreat? What does each show?

3. How did the retreating shoreline affect both a human activity and the physical environment?

4. To what extent did the 2005 dam reverse the water loss? Use evidence from the passage and table.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A coastal town plans a seawall to protect homes from storms. Write five sentences that pose a geographic question, name two kinds of maps or images and the dates you would compare, predict a spatial pattern, weigh one benefit against one environmental cost, and identify a limit of your evidence.

ANSWER KEY

A Sea Divided

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.P.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two changes shown by maps or images, circle the decisions that affected water, and label one benefit B and one cost C. Use your marks to connect decisions with changes in places. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the 1960 and 2000 entries. What changed in both the sea and land use, and what decision helps explain the pattern?	**The sea changed from one connected body of water to separated northern and southern waters, while irrigated fields expanded. Soviet planners' decision to expand irrigation canals helps explain both changes.**
2	Which two kinds of mapped evidence would you compare to investigate whether expanding farms coincided with the sea's retreat? What does each show?	**Survey maps and satellite images show changes in the sea. Land-use maps show the spread of irrigated fields.**
3	How did the retreating shoreline affect both a human activity and the physical environment?	**Former fishing ports were left far from water, and exposed lakebed sent salt and dust into the air.**
4	To what extent did the 2005 dam reverse the water loss? Use evidence from the passage and table.	**The dam helped raise water levels in the North Aral Sea, but it did not restore the whole lake. The 2014 image shows that the eastern basin still appeared dry in late summer.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How would a seawall change storm flooding and beach erosion along the town's shore? I would compare satellite images and storm flood maps from 2025, before construction, and 2030, after construction. I predict less flooding behind the wall but a narrower beach next to it. Protecting homes could reduce damage, while beach loss could harm nesting sites. Storms can vary in strength, so the maps alone cannot prove the wall caused every change.

Accept other evidence-based descriptions of the sea's retreat and the spread of irrigation. For Part 3, accept plausible patterns and tradeoffs if the response identifies two geographic sources, comparison dates, and a limit of the evidence.