Name: _____ Date: _____

Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

Circle group

Some rivers do not run straight. On flat land, they wind back and forth. The big loops are called bends. Sometimes a bend leaves the river and becomes a lake.

Water moves fastest on the outside of a bend. It wears away the bank. The bank crumbles. On the inside of the bend, the water is slow. Mud and sand settle there and pile up.

Over many years, the loop gets bigger. Its two ends get close together. Then a flood comes. The river breaks through the narrow neck of land. Now it flows straight.

Mud and sand block the old loop at both ends. It is cut off. It is now a lake shaped like a horseshoe. It is called an oxbow lake. The name comes from a U-shaped piece of wood that went around the neck of an ox.

Birds and turtles like the calm lake.

Questions

1. What are the big loops in a winding river called?

_____

_____

2. Where does the water move fastest?

_____

_____

3. What happens to mud and sand on the inside of a bend?

_____

_____

4. What may happen to the neck of land in a flood?

_____

_____

5. Why does the old loop become a lake?

_____

_____

6. Why is it called an oxbow lake?

_____

_____

Words to know

bends: curves or turns in a river
bank: the land along the side of a river
crumbles: breaks into small pieces
flood: a time when a river spills over onto dry land
horseshoe: a curved shape like the letter U

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

Triangle group

Some rivers do not run straight. On flat land, they wind back and forth in big loops called bends. Sometimes a bend leaves the river and becomes a lake.

Water moves fastest on the outside of a bend. There it wears away the bank, and the bank slowly crumbles. On the inside of the bend, the water is slow, so mud and sand settle down and pile up.

Over many years, the loop gets bigger and bigger. The two ends of a loop come closer and closer together. At last, during a flood, the river may break through the narrow neck of land. Now it can flow straight across.

Mud and sand soon block the old loop at both ends. The loop is cut off from the river. It is now a curved lake that looks like a horseshoe. People call it an oxbow lake, after the U-shaped piece of wood that was once put around the neck of an ox.

The lake is calm and quiet, and birds and turtles often enjoy it.

Questions

1. What are the big loops in a winding river called?

_____

_____

2. Where does the water move fastest?

_____

_____

3. What happens to mud and sand on the inside of a bend?

_____

_____

4. What may happen to the neck of land during a flood?

_____

_____

5. Why does the old loop become a lake?

_____

_____

6. Why is it called an oxbow lake?

_____

_____

Words to know

bends: curves or turns in a river
bank: the land along the side of a river
crumbles: breaks into small pieces
flood: a time when a river spills over onto dry land
horseshoe: a curved shape like the letter U

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

Square group

Some rivers do not run in a straight line. When they cross flat land, they wind back and forth in enormous loops that are called bends, and occasionally a bend separates from the river and turns into a lake.

Water moves fastest around the outside of a bend, where it wears away the bank until the bank slowly crumbles. On the inside of the bend, the water is slow, so mud and sand settle down and gradually pile up.

Over many years, the loop grows larger, and its two ends move closer and closer together. Finally, during a flood, the river may break through the narrow neck of land and begin to flow straight across.

Soon mud and sand block the old loop at both ends, and it is cut off from the river. It becomes a curved lake that resembles a horseshoe. People call it an oxbow lake, after the U-shaped piece of wood that was once fitted around the neck of an ox.

The calm, quiet water is often a pleasant home for birds and turtles.

Questions

1. What are the enormous loops in a winding river called?

_____

_____

2. Where does the water move fastest?

_____

_____

3. What happens to mud and sand on the inside of a bend?

_____

_____

4. What may the river do during a flood?

_____

_____

5. Why does the old loop turn into a lake?

_____

_____

6. How did the oxbow lake get its name?

_____

_____

Words to know

bends: curves or turns in a river
bank: the land along the side of a river
crumbles: breaks into small pieces
flood: a time when a river spills over onto dry land
horseshoe: a curved shape like the letter U

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

Easier · 149 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1.2

1. Bends.
2. On the outside of a bend.
3. They settle and pile up.
4. The river breaks through and flows straight.
5. Mud and sand block both ends, so it is cut off from the river.
6. It is shaped like the U-shaped wood that went around an ox's neck.

Triangle: Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

This passage · 175 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.4

1. Bends.
2. On the outside of a bend.
3. They settle down and pile up.
4. The river may break through it and flow straight across.
5. Mud and sand block both ends, so it is cut off from the river.
6. Its shape is like the U-shaped piece of wood that went around an ox's neck.

Square: Oxbow Lakes: When a River Takes a Shortcut

Harder · 179 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7

1. Bends.
2. Around the outside of a bend.
3. They settle down and gradually pile up.
4. Break through the narrow neck of land and flow straight across.
5. Mud and sand block both ends and cut it off from the river.
6. Its shape resembles the U-shaped wood that was fitted around an ox's neck.