Name: _____ Date: _____

Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

Circle group

Think about growing rice on a steep mountain. Rain would wash the soil downhill. Seeds would slide away. Farmers in many places found a clever fix. They built terraces.

A terrace is a flat shelf cut into a slope. Many shelves in a row look like a giant staircase. A wall of stone or packed earth holds up each step. Crops grow on the flat top of each step.

Terraces solve many problems. The flat ground slows the water after a rain. Less soil washes away. Some terraces hold water in the field, and rice needs water. Water can also trickle from one step to the next.

Building terraces takes years. The walls must be fixed often. But some terraces have been farmed for hundreds of years. They turn land that looked useless into green fields.

Questions

1. Why is it hard to farm on a steep mountain?

_____

_____

2. What is a terrace?

_____

_____

3. What holds up each step?

_____

_____

4. How do terraces keep soil from washing away?

_____

_____

5. Why are terraces good for rice?

_____

_____

6. Why do terraces turn useless land into green fields?

_____

_____

Words to know

terraces: flat steps cut into the side of a hill for growing crops
slope: ground that slants up or down
trickle: to flow in a thin, slow stream
steep: rising or falling very sharply

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: _____

Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

Triangle group

Imagine trying to grow rice on the side of a steep mountain. Rain would wash the soil downhill, and seeds would slide away with it. Farmers in many parts of the world found a clever answer. They built terraces.

A terrace is a flat shelf cut into a slope. Many shelves in a row look like a giant staircase. Each step is held up by a wall of stone or packed earth. The flat top of each step is where the crops grow.

Terraces solve several problems at once. The flat ground slows the water that runs down after a rain, so less soil is washed away. Some terraces hold the water in the field, which is just what rice plants need. Water can also trickle from one step to the next, so the whole mountain gets a drink.

Building terraces takes years of hard work, and the walls must be fixed often. Yet some terraces have been farmed for hundreds of years. They turn land that looked useless into green fields.

Questions

1. Why is it hard to farm on a steep mountain?

_____

_____

2. What is a terrace?

_____

_____

3. What holds up each step of a terrace?

_____

_____

4. How do terraces keep soil from washing away?

_____

_____

5. Why are terraces good for growing rice?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage say terraces turn land that looked useless into green fields?

_____

_____

Words to know

terraces: flat steps cut into the side of a hill for growing crops
slope: ground that slants up or down
trickle: to flow in a thin, slow stream
steep: rising or falling very sharply

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: _____

Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

Square group

Imagine attempting to grow rice on the side of a steep mountain. The rain would wash the soil downhill, and the seeds would slide away along with it. Farmers in many parts of the world discovered a clever solution: they built terraces.

A terrace is a flat shelf carved into a slope. When many shelves are arranged in a row, they resemble an enormous staircase. A wall of stone or packed earth supports each step, and the flat top of every step is where the crops are planted.

Terraces solve several problems at the same time. The level ground slows the water that rushes downhill after a storm, so far less soil is carried away. Certain terraces also hold water in the field, which is exactly what rice plants require. In addition, water can trickle from one step down to the next, so the entire mountainside receives a drink.

Building terraces demands years of hard labor, and the walls need frequent repair. Nevertheless, some terraces have been farmed for hundreds of years, transforming land that once looked useless into lush green fields.

Questions

1. Why is it difficult to farm on a steep mountain?

_____

_____

2. What is a terrace?

_____

_____

3. What supports each step of a terrace?

_____

_____

4. How do terraces reduce the amount of soil carried away?

_____

_____

5. Why are some terraces well suited to growing rice?

_____

_____

6. In what way do terraces transform land that looked useless?

_____

_____

Words to know

terraces: flat steps cut into the side of a hill for growing crops
slope: ground that slants up or down
trickle: to flow in a thin, slow stream
steep: rising or falling very sharply

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: Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

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

Circle: Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

Easier · 136 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.7

1. Rain washes the soil downhill and seeds slide away.
2. A flat shelf cut into a slope.
3. A wall of stone or packed earth.
4. The flat ground slows the water after a rain.
5. Some terraces hold water in the field, and rice needs water.
6. Steep land is hard to farm, but terraces make flat places for crops.

Triangle: Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

This passage · 172 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.6

1. Rain washes the soil downhill and the seeds slide away.
2. A flat shelf cut into a slope.
3. A wall of stone or packed earth.
4. The flat ground slows the water that runs down after rain.
5. Some terraces hold water in the field, and rice plants need water.
6. Steep land seemed too hard to farm, but terraces make flat places where crops can grow.

Square: Farming on Steps Carved Into a Mountain

Harder · 182 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.1

1. Rain washes the soil downhill and the seeds slide away.
2. A flat shelf carved into a slope.
3. A wall of stone or packed earth.
4. The level ground slows the water that rushes downhill after a storm.
5. They hold water in the field, which rice plants require.
6. Steep land seemed too hard to farm, but terraces create level places where crops can grow.