Name: _____ Date: _____

# Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

Circle group

Rice needs lots of water to grow. That is easy on flat land, where a field can be flooded. But in parts of Asia the land is steep. There are few flat places. Farmers there made flat land on the hills. They built terraces.

A terrace is a wide step cut into a slope. Farmers dig into the hill. They build a low wall along the edge of each step. Row after row makes a huge staircase. Each step is almost flat, so it can hold a shallow pool of water around the young rice.

Water often comes from a stream above. It flows into the top terrace. When that one is full, it spills to the next. One spring can feed a whole hill.

Terraces also protect the land. On a steep slope, heavy rain can wash good soil away. The walls and steps slow the water.

You can see terraces in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. They look like ribbons of green or gold.

## Questions

**1. Why does rice do well on flat fields?**

_____

_____

**2. What is a terrace?**

_____

_____

**3. How does water get to the next terrace?**

_____

_____

**4. What problem do terraces help stop on steep hills?**

_____

_____

**5. Can you name two places with terraces?**

_____

_____

**6. Why might the fields look green at one time and gold at another?**

_____

_____

## Words to know

terrace: a flat step built into the side of a hill
steep: rising or falling very sharply
spring: a place where water flows naturally out of the ground
protect: to keep safe from harm

## 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: _____

# Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

Triangle group

Rice needs plenty of water to grow well. That is easy to give a plant on flat land, where a field can be flooded. But in parts of Asia the land is steep, with few flat places. Farmers there found a way to bring the flat land to the hills. They built terraces.

A terrace is a wide step cut into a slope. Farmers dig into the hillside and build a low wall along the edge of each step. Row after row, they make a huge staircase that climbs the hill. Each step is nearly level, so it can hold a shallow pool of water around the young rice plants.

Water often arrives from a stream above the hill. It flows into the top terrace, and when that one is full, it spills down to the next. In this way, one spring can feed an entire hillside.

Terraces also protect the land. On a steep slope, heavy rain can wash good soil away. The walls and level steps slow the water and keep the soil in place.

Terraces can be found in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other lands. From far away, they look like curved ribbons of green or gold, depending on the season.

## Questions

**1. Why do rice plants need flat fields?**

_____

_____

**2. What is a terrace?**

_____

_____

**3. How does water get from one terrace to the next?**

_____

_____

**4. What problem do terraces help prevent on steep hills?**

_____

_____

**5. Can you name two places where terraces can be found?**

_____

_____

**6. Why might the fields look green at one time and gold at another?**

_____

_____

## Words to know

terrace: a flat step built into the side of a hill
steep: rising or falling very sharply
level: flat, with no slope
spring: a place where water flows naturally out of the ground
protect: to keep safe from harm

## 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: _____

# Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

Square group

Rice requires an abundance of water to grow well. That is easy to provide on flat land, where an entire field can be flooded. In parts of Asia, however, the land is steep, with very few level places. Farmers there discovered a way to bring the flat land to the hills. They built terraces.

A terrace is a wide step cut into a slope. Farmers dig into the hillside and construct a low wall along the edge of each step. Row after row, they create an enormous staircase that climbs the hill. Each step is nearly level, so it can hold a shallow pool of water around the young rice plants.

Water frequently arrives from a stream above the hill. It flows into the top terrace, and once that one is full, it spills down to the next. In this way, a single spring can nourish an entire hillside.

Terraces also protect the land itself. On a steep slope, heavy rain can wash good soil away, but the walls and level steps slow the water and keep the soil in place.

Terraces can be found in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other lands. From a distance, they look like curved ribbons of green or gold, depending on the season.

## Questions

**1. Why do rice plants grow best in level fields?**

_____

_____

**2. What is a terrace?**

_____

_____

**3. How does water travel from one terrace to the next?**

_____

_____

**4. What problem do terraces help prevent on steep hills?**

_____

_____

**5. Can you name two places where terraces can be found?**

_____

_____

**6. Why might the fields appear green at one time and gold at another?**

_____

_____

## Words to know

terrace: a flat step built into the side of a hill
steep: rising or falling very sharply
level: flat, with no slope
spring: a place where water flows naturally out of the ground
protect: to keep safe from harm

## 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: Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

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

### Circle: Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

Easier · 167 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.7

1. Rice needs lots of water, and flat land can be flooded.
2. A wide step cut into a slope.
3. When one is full, it spills down to the next.
4. Heavy rain washing the good soil away.
5. Any two of China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.
6. The color changes with the season as the rice grows and ripens.

### Triangle: Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

This passage · 206 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.1

1. Rice needs a lot of water, and flat land can hold a flooded field.
2. A wide step cut into a slope.
3. When one step is full, the water spills down to the next.
4. Heavy rain washing the good soil away.
5. Any two of China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.
6. The color changes with the season as the rice grows and ripens.

### Square: Giant Staircases Carved Into Hillsides

Harder · 210 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.5

1. Rice needs an abundance of water, and flat land can hold a flooded field.
2. A wide step cut into a slope.
3. Once one step is full, the water spills down to the next.
4. Heavy rain washing the good soil away.
5. Any two of China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.
6. The color changes with the season as the rice grows and ripens.