Name: _____ Date: _____

The Nile, a River in the Desert

Circle group

The Nile is one of the longest rivers on Earth. It is about four thousand miles long. Unlike most rivers, it flows north. It starts in the highlands of East Africa and ends at the Mediterranean Sea. On the way, it crosses the Sahara Desert, one of the driest places in the world.

For thousands of years, Egypt has needed the Nile to live. Each summer, rain fell far up the river. The river rose and spilled over its banks. When the water went back down, it left a layer of dark, rich mud called silt. Farmers planted wheat, barley, and flax in the mud. They grew enough food to feed a large and growing nation.

The ancient Egyptians built their calendar around the river. Their year had three seasons: a flood season, a growing season, and a harvest season. The Nile was also their road. Boats carried people, grain, and the huge stone blocks for the pyramids. The current flows north, but the wind usually blows south. So sailors could float one way and sail back the other way.

Today, the Nile does not flood the way it once did. In 1970, Egypt finished the Aswan High Dam. The dam holds the water in a huge lake. It controls how much water goes out. It keeps farms safe from floods and dry spells, and it makes electricity. But it also traps the silt that once fed the fields. Now many farmers use fertilizer. The Nile still gives life to millions of people. But they must keep weighing the good it does against the harm.

Questions

1. Which way does the Nile flow? Where does it end?

_____

_____

2. What is silt, and why did farmers need it?

_____

_____

3. How did boats use the Nile?

_____

_____

4. Name two things the Aswan High Dam does.

_____

_____

5. What does it mean to keep "weighing the good it does against the harm"?

_____

_____

Words to know

highlands: an area of high ground

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: _____

The Nile, a River in the Desert

Triangle group

Stretching about four thousand miles, the Nile is one of the longest rivers on Earth. Unlike most rivers, it flows north, beginning in the highlands of East Africa and ending at the Mediterranean Sea. Along the way it crosses some of the driest land in the world, the Sahara Desert.

For thousands of years, the Nile has been the lifeline of Egypt. Each summer, rain falling far upstream caused the river to swell and spill over its banks. When the water drew back, it left behind a layer of dark, fertile mud called silt. Farmers planted wheat, barley, and flax in this rich soil, and they could harvest enough food to feed a growing civilization.

The ancient Egyptians organized their whole calendar around the river. They divided the year into a flood season, a growing season, and a harvest season. They also used the Nile as a highway. Boats carried travelers, grain, and the huge stone blocks used to build the pyramids, and because the current flows north while the wind usually blows south, sailors could drift one way and sail the other.

Today, the Nile no longer floods the way it once did. In 1970, Egypt finished the Aswan High Dam, which holds back the water in a huge lake and controls how much is released. The dam protects farms from floods and droughts and produces electricity. But it also traps the silt that once refreshed the fields, so many farmers now rely on fertilizer. Like many great rivers, the Nile still gives life to millions of people, but they must keep working to balance its benefits and costs.

Questions

1. In which direction does the Nile flow, and where does it end?

_____

_____

2. What is silt, and why was it important to farmers?

_____

_____

3. How did the Nile help with transportation in ancient Egypt?

_____

_____

4. What are two effects of the Aswan High Dam?

_____

_____

5. What does the author mean in saying people "must keep working to balance its benefits and costs"?

_____

_____

Words to know

fertile: able to grow plants and crops well
civilization: a large, organized society with cities, farming, and government
lifeline: something that a group depends on to survive
drought: a long time with little or no rain
highlands: an area of high ground

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: _____

The Nile, a River in the Desert

Square group

Stretching roughly four thousand miles, the Nile ranks among the longest rivers on Earth. It is unusual in another respect as well. Unlike most rivers, it flows northward, rising in the highlands of East Africa and emptying at last into the Mediterranean Sea. Along its course, it traverses some of the most arid territory in the world, the immense expanse of the Sahara Desert.

For thousands of years, the Nile has served as Egypt's lifeline. Each summer, rainfall far upstream caused the river to swell until it overflowed its banks. When the floodwaters eventually receded, they deposited a layer of dark, fertile sediment known as silt. In this nourishing soil, farmers cultivated wheat, barley, and flax, harvesting enough food to sustain an expanding civilization.

The ancient Egyptians organized their entire calendar around the river's rhythms, dividing the year into a season of flooding, a season of cultivation, and a season of harvest. They also depended on the Nile as a transportation corridor. Vessels conveyed travelers, grain, and the enormous stone blocks used in constructing the pyramids, and because the current flows northward while the prevailing wind generally blows southward, sailors could drift in one direction and hoist their sails to travel in the other.

Today, the Nile no longer floods as it once did. In 1970, Egypt completed the Aswan High Dam, which impounds the water in an immense reservoir and regulates how much is released downstream. The dam shields agriculture from both destructive floods and prolonged droughts, and it generates electricity. However, it also traps the silt that once replenished the fields, so many farmers now depend on fertilizer instead. Like many of the world's great rivers, the Nile continues to sustain millions of people, but they must perpetually weigh its considerable benefits against its costs.

Questions

1. In which direction does the Nile flow, and where does its course terminate?

_____

_____

2. What is silt, and why was it so valuable to Egyptian agriculture?

_____

_____

3. How did the Egyptians exploit both the current and the wind for transportation?

_____

_____

4. Identify two consequences of the Aswan High Dam, and classify each as a benefit or a cost.

_____

_____

5. What does the author suggest by saying people "must perpetually weigh its considerable benefits against its costs"?

_____

_____

Words to know

fertile: able to grow plants and crops well
civilization: a large, organized society with cities, farming, and government
lifeline: something that a group depends on to survive
drought: a long time with little or no rain
highlands: an area of high ground

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: The Nile, a River in the Desert

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

Circle: The Nile, a River in the Desert

Easier · 264 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.1

1. North. It ends at the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Dark, rich mud left behind when the flood water went down. Crops grew well in it.
3. Boats carried people, grain, and stone blocks. The current goes north and the wind usually blows south, so sailors could float one way and sail back the other.
4. Any two of: it keeps farms safe from floods and dry spells, it makes electricity, and it traps silt so farmers need fertilizer.
5. The river and the dam help people but also cause problems, like lost silt, so people have to keep thinking about both sides.

Triangle: The Nile, a River in the Desert

This passage · 269 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.9

1. North, ending at the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Dark, fertile mud left behind when the flood waters drew back. It made the soil rich for growing crops.
3. Boats carried people, grain, and stone blocks. The current flows north and the wind usually blows south, so sailors could drift one way and sail the other.
4. Any two of: it protects farms from floods and droughts, it makes electricity, and it traps silt so farmers need fertilizer.
5. The river and dam help people but also cause problems, such as lost silt, so people must keep weighing the good and the bad.

Square: The Nile, a River in the Desert

Harder · 296 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 11.4

1. Northward, emptying into the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Dark, fertile sediment deposited when the floodwaters receded. It enriched the soil so farmers could cultivate wheat, barley, and flax.
3. Vessels carried travelers, grain, and stone blocks. The current flows north while the prevailing wind blows south, so sailors could drift one way and sail the other.
4. Benefits: it shields farms from floods and droughts and generates electricity. Cost: it traps silt, so farmers must depend on fertilizer. Any two, correctly classified.
5. The river and the dam bring real advantages and real problems, such as the loss of silt, so people must keep balancing the good against the bad rather than settling the question once.