

Ancient Egypt: The Gift of the Nile

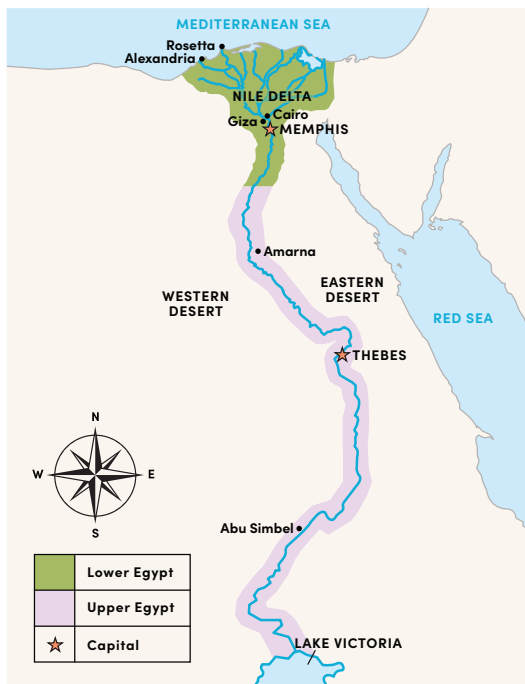
Ancient Egypt was one of the most accomplished and enduring civilizations. The ancient Egyptians built a thriving kingdom that lasted from 3100 BCE to 332 BCE. The Nile River was a source of greatness for ancient Egypt and was the centerpiece of Egyptian life. Here are some reasons why:

- △ The Nile stretches for **over 4,000 miles**. It's the world's longest river!
- △ The Nile flows north, forming a **fertile triangle-shaped delta** that empties into the Mediterranean Sea.
- △ The Nile's waters rose in the spring and summer and receded in the fall. Its **floods were predictable**.
- △ The Nile's flood waters soaked the ground, producing deposits of **silt that fertilized the soil**.
- △ The Nile produced **papyrus reeds** used to make rope, baskets, and paper-like scrolls for writing.
- △ The Nile was so important that the Egyptians worshipped a **god of the Nile**, called Hapi.

Next, follow the instructions to analyze the geography of the Nile and the importance of the Nile in everyday life.

Sample answers

Explore this map of the ancient Nile and answer the questions.



1. What natural barriers did Ancient Egypt have to its north, west, and east?

The Mediterranean Sea was a natural border to the north. The Red Sea was a border to the west. The deserts bordered both the western and eastern sides.

2. What impact do you think Egypt's natural barriers had on its ability to fight off invaders?

Invaders would need to cross a large body of water or desert to reach the ancient Egyptians.

3. What capital city developed just south of the Nile delta?

Memphis

4. What capital city was established in the northern part of Upper Egypt?

Thebes

5. The Nile River starts at Lake Victoria in the Central African mountains and flows north to the Mediterranean Sea. That's why Lower Egypt is located to the north and Upper Egypt is located to the south. Why do you think Lower Egypt had more settlements than Upper Egypt?

The land in Lower Egypt was quite fertile, especially near the delta. People settled in Lower Egypt because it was easier to grow crops there.

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Keep going! Answer the questions below using the information at the top of page 1. Sample answers

6. The Nile provided a fertile habitat for many animals and plants, including papyrus reeds. What products did the ancient Egyptians use papyrus reeds to make?

Papyrus reeds were used to make rope, baskets, and paper-like scrolls for writing.

7. Rivers can suddenly flood and become dangerous. Why did the ancient Egyptians not fear Nile River floods?

The Nile's floods were predictable. The Egyptians could plan for the floods and wouldn't

be caught by surprise.

Take it a step further! Think about how the Nile contributed to the lives of everyday Egyptians and answer the questions below.

8. If you were an ancient Egyptian scribe updating the pharaoh's scrolls on the amount of barley or wheat grown each season, how would the Nile help you do your job?

The Nile would be responsible for the growth of the crops I'm writing about, as well as the papyrus I'm writing on.

9. If you were an ancient Egyptian merchant carrying goods between Lower and Upper Egypt, how would the Nile help you be successful?

The Nile would provide flowing water for carrying goods on rafts or on boats between

Lower and Upper Egypt.

Bonus question!

In the fourth century BCE, the Greek historian Herodotus reported in his *Histories* that "Egypt is the gift of the Nile." Do you agree? Why or why not?

Answers may vary.