Name: _____

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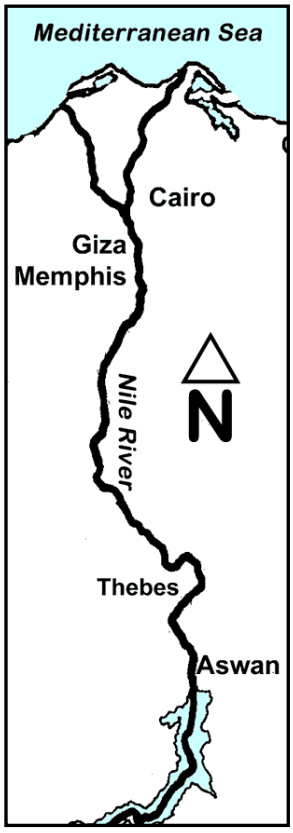
# THE GIFT OF THE NILE

Like a giant snake, the Nile River slithers through some of the driest desert land on earth to create a narrow green valley. The ancient Greeks called this land Aegyptus; we call it Egypt.

For more than five thousand years, civilizations thrived along the banks of the Nile. About 450 BCE, a Greek historian named Herodotus called Egypt the "Gift of the Nile" because Egyptian civilization depended on the resources of the great river.




## The Annual Flood

Every spring, seasonal rains in the mountains of East Africa sent a torrent of water that overflowed the banks of the Nile and flooded the river valley. The rushing river picked up bits of soil and plant life called silt. As the annual flood receded, a strip of black topsoil emerged every year along the banks of the Nile. The silt was rich in nutrients, providing the people of Egypt with two or three crops each year.

## Geography of the Nile Valley

That green valley enabled the people of ancient Egypt to form one of the first civilizations in history. A nation may refer to a community of people who share a common language, culture, ethnic background, or history. The land beyond the Nile River Valley is the Sahara Desert. A desert is land that receives less than ten inches of rain in a typical year. Since it is nearly impossible to grow much food in the desert, few people lived far from the banks of the Nile. South of the city of Aswan, giant boulders and rocky rapids called cataracts made travel along the Nile difficult and limited contact with people to the south. The Nile flows into the vast Mediterranean Sea, forming a natural border to the north. Egypt's isolation led to its unification. People living along the banks of the Nile River spoke the same language and worshipped many of the same gods more than five thousand years ago.

## The Aswan High Dam

The Nile no longer overflows its banks because modern Egyptians built a massive dam in Aswan. Since 1970, the Aswan High Dam has held back the water that annually flooded the banks of the Nile River. The dam also provides a reliable water supply for Egyptian farmers during the dry season. The people of Egypt can now convert the predictable flow of the Nile into electricity. The Aswan High Dam initially provided electricity to more than half of the villages along the Nile. The population of Egypt has grown since then, but the Aswan High Dam still accounts for about ten percent of Egypt's electricity. Unlike oil, flowing water is renewable, so the river will not run out. Ancient and modern civilizations have relied on the mighty river, proving that Egypt truly is the "Gift of the Nile."

## Map Skills

1. The Nile River Delta is a rich farming area where the Nile spreads out before draining into the Mediterranean Sea. The Delta is shaped like a triangle, which reminded the Greeks of a letter in their alphabet called delta. (△) Please write the word **DELTA** in the correct location.

2. We know the Nile flows into the Mediterranean Sea. In what direction does the Nile flow along most of its course? Circle the correct answer: **NORTH SOUTH EAST WEST**

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## Fill in the Blanks

An ancient Greek historian named H__r__d__t__s called Egypt the "G_____ of the N_____" because the E__y__t__an people have depended on the r__v__r for more than five t__o__s__nd years. Until 1970, the Nile would o__e__f__ow its b__n__s every year. When the flood *s__b__i__ed, it left behind bits of s_____ and p__a__t__i__e called silt. The silt was rich in n__t__i__n__s that allowed the people of ancient Egypt to grow c__o__s on land that would have otherwise have been dry d_____. The Nile no longer overflows its banks because Egypt constructed a massive dam in A__w__n. While the Nile no longer provides t__p__o__l, the p__e__i__t__b__e flow of the r__v__r supplies the Egyptian people with a r__n__w__b__e source of e__e__t__i__i__y.

## Answer in Complete Sentences

*3. A simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things. Copy the sentence in the passage that contains a simile.

4. What is silt?

*5. Write a paragraph that explains how ancient Egypt was isolated from other cultures by natural borders. Your paragraph must have a topic sentence, at least two support sentences, and a conclusion sentence that restates but does not repeat the topic sentence.

6. Explain why the Nile River no longer overflows its banks.

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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