Start here

The Gift of the Nile — a complete Ancient Egypt history lesson (Grades 2-3)

This PDF is the whole lesson, in teaching order, so you can read it on a phone without unzipping anything.

What is in this file

- The teacher lesson plan.
- Three versions of the student sheet (support, core and stretch) and an exit quiz with answers.
- A one-page knowledge organiser.
- A short assessment (use it before and after the lesson) and a mark scheme. Its pages say "unit" because the same template serves our longer units; here it covers this one lesson.

What is in the ZIP instead

The slide deck (PowerPoint) and editable Word versions of everything in this PDF. Open the ZIP when you want to project or edit.

This is a complete lesson, given to you free. It is not a sample or a taster: plan it in the morning and teach it in the afternoon.

The Teaching Couple · dan@theteachingcouple.com

Lesson 1 of 1

The gift of the Nile

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Grade **Grades 2-3**

Band **Upper Elementary**

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

I can describe where Ancient Egypt was and explain why the River Nile mattered so much.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can say where Egypt and the River Nile are
- I can give the rough dates of Ancient Egypt (3100 BC - 30 BC)
- I can give ONE reason the Nile was important

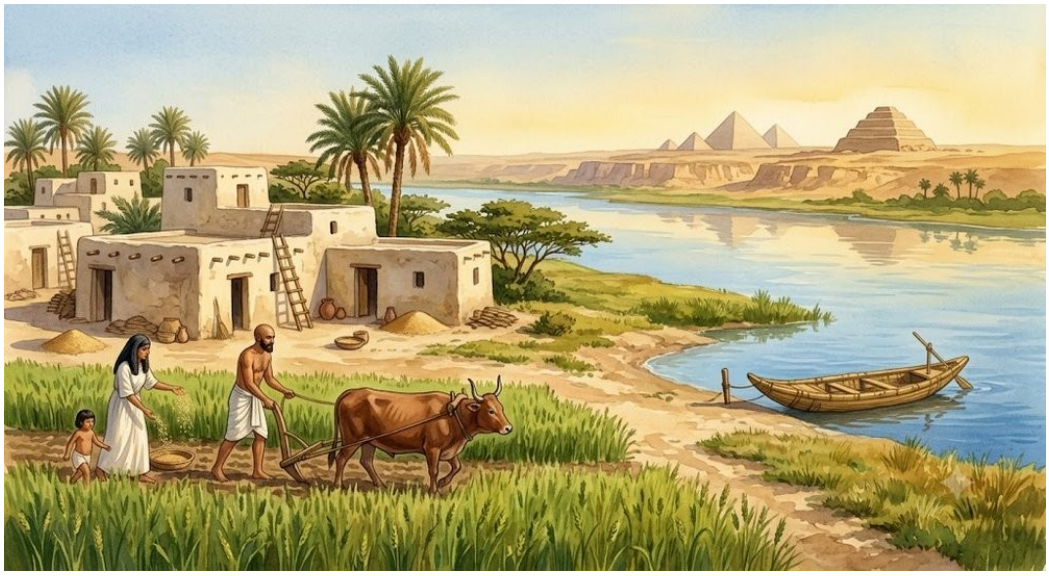


Illustration: An Egyptian village beside the Nile — the river made everything possible.

Retrieval starter

Quick recall of prior learning. Answer in full sentences.

1. What does the word "civilization" mean?
2. Can you name a great river in the world?
3. Which continent is Egypt in?
4. What does ‘BC’ mean?

Key vocabulary

delta	River Nile	flood	Kemet
The wide, flat, marshy land where a river splits into channels before it meets the sea.	The great river that flows north through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.	When a river rises over its banks. The Nile flooded every summer.	‘The Black Land’ — the Egyptians’ own name for their country, after the dark mud.

Teaching sequence

1. When was Ancient Egypt?

Ancient Egypt lasted a VERY long time. It began around 3100 BC, when two lands along the River Nile were joined into one country under one king. It ended in 30 BC, when Queen CLEOPATRA died and Egypt became part of the Roman Empire. That is over 3,000 YEARS. To compare: from Cleopatra to today is only about 2,000 years. Ancient Egypt lasted about one and a half times as long as that. The great pyramids at Giza were built around 2500 BC. That means Cleopatra lived closer in time to US than to the building of those pyramids!



A reed boat — made from papyrus reeds the Nile grew in plenty.

2. The gift of the Nile

Egypt is mostly DESERT. Very little rain falls there, and without water NOTHING grows. But running through Egypt from south to north is the RIVER NILE — one of the two longest rivers in the world, about 6,650 km long. Every summer, heavy rain far to the south, in the mountains of Ethiopia, swelled the river, and the Nile FLOODED its banks. When the water went down a few months later, it left behind a layer of rich, DARK MUD. The Egyptians called their land KEMET — 'the Black Land' — after this dark soil. They planted WHEAT and BARLEY in the mud, and the crops grew well. Next year the flood came again and brought fresh mud. No flood meant no harvest — and no harvest meant no Egypt.



Illustration: The Nile flood — every summer, fresh rich mud for the crops.

3. Source: a Greek traveler on Egypt

Around 450 BC, a Greek traveler called HERODOTUS visited Egypt. By then Egypt was already very old — the pyramids had been standing for about 2,000 years. Herodotus wrote a long book about the places he visited, called 'The Histories'. Here is what he said about Egypt. We have put his words into simpler English.

SOURCE

"The Egypt that the Greeks sail to is land that the river has given to the Egyptians — it is the gift of the river.

The Egyptians have a climate unlike any other, and a river unlike any other river." — Herodotus, 'The Histories', Book 2, chapters 5 and 35 (written c. 430 BC), put into simpler English for this lesson.



Illustration: Wheat by the Nile — the rich harvest the river made possible.

4. Two lands made ONE

In its earliest days, Egypt was TWO kingdoms. LOWER EGYPT was in the north, where the Nile spreads out into many channels before it reaches the Mediterranean Sea — a wide, flat, marshy area called the DELTA. UPPER EGYPT was in the south. (It sounds back to front! 'Upper' means UP-RIVER, and the Nile flows from south to NORTH.) Around 3100 BC, a king from the south is said to have joined the two lands into ONE EGYPT. Later Egyptians remembered him as MENES; many historians think he was the king we know as NARMER. Ever after, the pharaoh was called 'Lord of the Two Lands'. Pharaohs wore a DOUBLE CROWN: the RED crown of Lower Egypt with the WHITE crown of Upper Egypt fitted inside it. For most of the next 3,000 years, Egypt was ruled as one land by a PHARAOH.



The double crown — red for the north, white for the south. ONE Egypt.

Activity

Sort the EIGHT cards into two groups: TRUE about Ancient Egypt and the Nile, or NOT TRUE.

1. CARDS: a. The Nile flows north. b. The Nile flooded every summer. c. The flood left rich, dark mud. d. Egypt had lots of rain. e. Farmers grew wheat and barley. f. Lower Egypt was in the south. g. Kemet means 'the Black Land'. h. Ancient Egypt lasted about 100 years.
2. Sort all eight cards, then pick ONE card and explain your choice with 'because'.
3. Fix the NOT TRUE cards: rewrite each one so it becomes true.
4. Challenge: write a new TRUE card about the Nile for a partner to sort.

Differentiation

Support	Core	Stretch
Sort the cards with a partner, using the word bank. Fix two of the NOT TRUE cards.	Sort all eight cards, explain one choice and fix every NOT TRUE card.	'Without the Nile, there would be no Ancient Egypt.' Do you agree? Write 4-5 sentences using ONE piece of evidence.

Watch for

⚠ Common mix-up: 'Lower Egypt' is in the NORTH, not the south. It is 'lower' because the Nile flows down to it.

⚠ Common mix-up: Ancient Egypt was NOT all sandy desert. People lived on a green strip of farmland beside the Nile.

⚠ Common mix-up: The Nile flows NORTH (from deep inside Africa to the Mediterranean), not south.

Exit ticket

Four short questions to check understanding.

1. Where was Ancient Egypt?
2. What did the Nile flood bring?
3. What does the word "delta" mean?

Green pen reflection

Would you have liked to live beside the Nile in Ancient Egypt? Give ONE reason.

Lesson 1 of 1 · SUPPORT TIER

The gift of the Nile

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Name:

Class:

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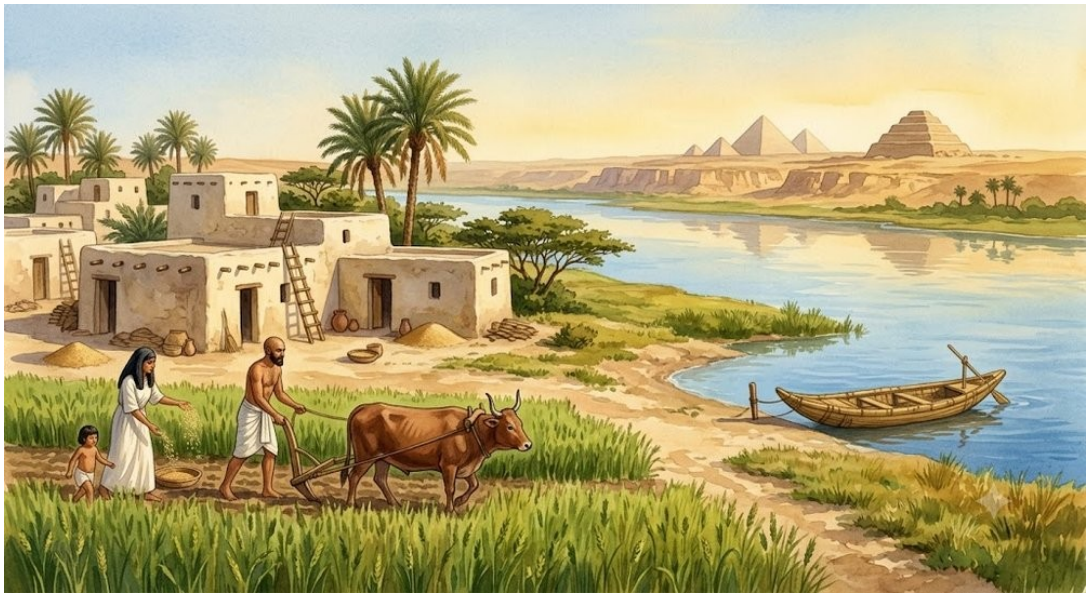


Illustration: An Egyptian village beside the Nile — the river made everything possible.

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1. What does the word "civilization" mean?

2. Can you name a great river in the world?

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Today's learning

1. When was Ancient Egypt?

Ancient Egypt lasted a VERY long time. It began around 3100 BC, when two lands along the River Nile were joined into one country under one king. It ended in 30 BC, when Queen CLEOPATRA died and Egypt became part of the Roman Empire. That is over 3,000 YEARS. To compare: from Cleopatra to today is only about 2,000 years. Ancient Egypt lasted about one and a half times as long as that. The great pyramids at Giza were built around 2500 BC. That means Cleopatra lived closer in time to US than to the building of those pyramids!



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Illustration: The Nile flood — every summer, fresh rich mud for the crops.

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Around 450 BC, a Greek traveler called HERODOTUS visited Egypt. By then Egypt was already very old — the pyramids had been standing for about 2,000 years. Herodotus wrote a long book about the places he visited, called 'The Histories'. Here is what he said about Egypt. We have put his words into simpler English.

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Illustration: Wheat by the Nile — the rich harvest the river made possible.

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In its earliest days, Egypt was TWO kingdoms. LOWER EGYPT was in the north, where the Nile spreads out into many channels before it reaches the Mediterranean Sea — a wide, flat, marshy area called the DELTA. UPPER EGYPT was in the south. (It sounds back to front! 'Upper' means UP-RIVER, and the Nile flows from south to NORTH.) Around 3100 BC, a king from the south is said to have joined the two lands into ONE EGYPT. Later Egyptians remembered him as MENES; many historians think he was the king we know as NARMER. Ever after, the pharaoh was called 'Lord of the Two Lands'. Pharaohs wore a DOUBLE CROWN: the RED crown of Lower Egypt with the WHITE crown of Upper Egypt fitted inside it. For most of the next 3,000 years, Egypt was ruled as one land by a PHARAOH.



The double crown — red for the north, white for the south. ONE Egypt.

Activity

Sort the EIGHT cards into two groups: TRUE about Ancient Egypt and the Nile, or NOT TRUE.

SUPPORT — USE THIS TO HELP YOU

Word bank: Egypt · Nile · 3100 BC · 30 BC · delta · desert · flood · Kemet · pharaoh

Use these starters:

1. Ancient Egypt began in about __ BC.
2. It was beside the great river __.
3. The Nile was important because __.

1. CARDS: a. The Nile flows north. b. The Nile flooded every summer. c. The flood left rich, dark mud. d. Egypt had lots of rain. e. Farmers grew wheat and barley. f. Lower Egypt was in the south. g. Kemet means 'the Black Land'. h. Ancient Egypt lasted about 100 years.

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Exit ticket

Four short questions to check understanding.

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2. What did the Nile flood bring?

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Green pen reflection

Would you have liked to live beside the Nile in Ancient Egypt? Give ONE reason.

Lesson 1 of 1

The gift of the Nile

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Name:

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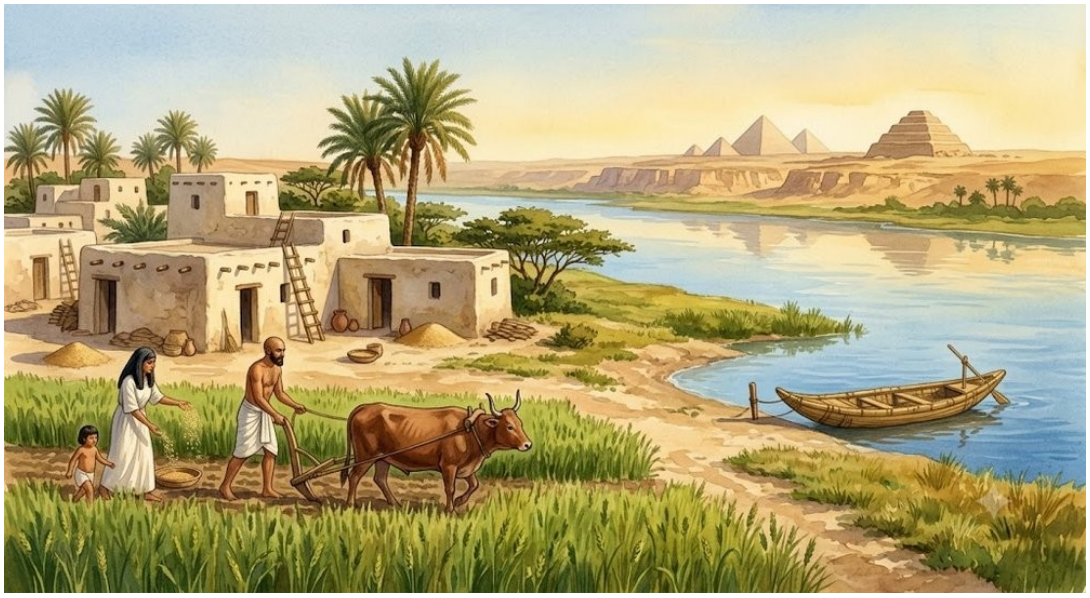


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Lesson 1 of 1 · STRETCH TIER

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The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

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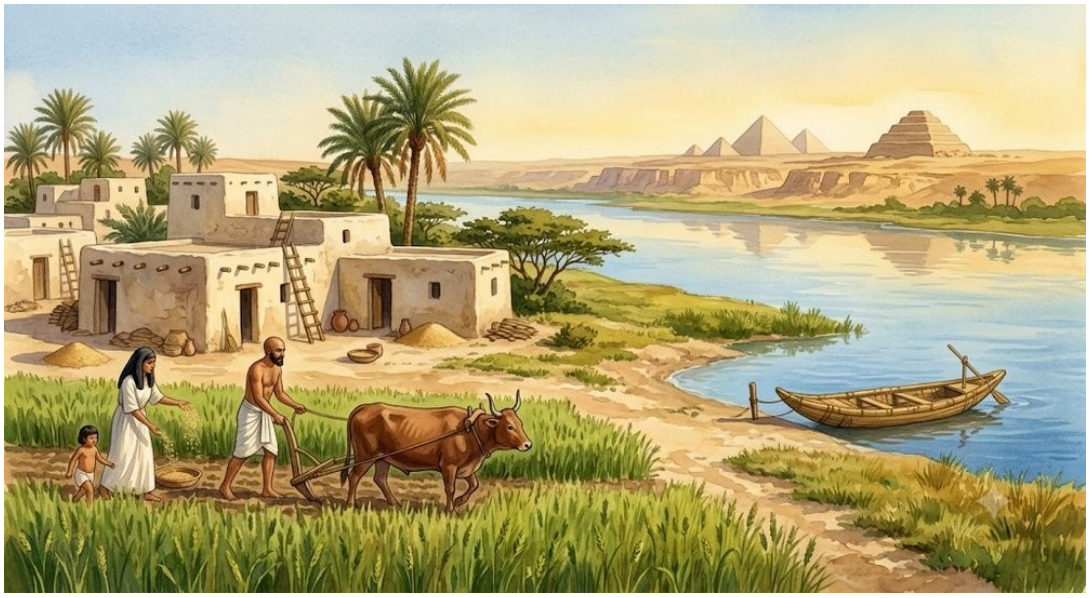


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3. Fix the NOT TRUE cards: rewrite each one so it becomes true.

4. Challenge: write a new TRUE card about the Nile for a partner to sort.

STRETCH CHALLENGE — ONLY ATTEMPT WHEN CORE IS DONE

'Without the Nile, there would be no Ancient Egypt.' Do you agree? Write 4-5 sentences using ONE piece of evidence.

Exit ticket

Four short questions to check understanding.

1. Where was Ancient Egypt?

2. What did the Nile flood bring?

3. What does the word "delta" mean?

Green pen reflection

Would you have liked to live beside the Nile in Ancient Egypt? Give ONE reason.

Grades 2-3 · History

Lesson 1: The gift of the Nile

Exit Quiz

Name: **Class:** **Date:**

Quick recall

Answer each question in a complete sentence. Use today's learning to help you.

1. Where was Ancient Egypt?

2. What did the Nile flood bring?

3. REFLECT: Would you have liked to live beside the Nile in Ancient Egypt? Give ONE reason.

STAR / MEDAL / WISH:

Grades 2-3 · History

Lesson 1: The gift of the Nile

Exit Quiz — Answer Key

Use these as guides. Accept reasonable variations.

Mark scheme

Q1. **Where was Ancient Egypt?**

Model answer: In north-east Africa, along the River Nile.

Q2. **What did the Nile flood bring?**

Model answer: Rich, dark mud that crops could grow in.

Q3. **REFLECT: Would you have liked to live beside the Nile in Ancient Egypt? Give ONE reason.**

Model answer: Open question — accept any thoughtful personal response.

Lesson reminder

LO: I can describe where Ancient Egypt was and explain why the River Nile mattered so much.

- I can say where Egypt and the River Nile are
- I can give the rough dates of Ancient Egypt (3100 BC - 30 BC)
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KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZER

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Upper Elementary · Grades 2-3 · The achievements of the earliest civilizations — Ancient Egypt c. 3100-30 BC



BIG QUESTION

Why do we say Ancient Egypt was 'the gift of the Nile'?

TIMELINE

c. 3100 BC Upper and Lower Egypt are joined into one kingdom.
c. 2500 BC The great pyramids are built at Giza.
c. 450 BC The Greek traveler Herodotus visits Egypt.
30 BC Cleopatra dies. Egypt becomes part of the Roman Empire.
1970 The Aswan High Dam is finished. The Nile stops flooding every year.

KEY VOCABULARY

fertile Good for growing crops.
flood When water rises over dry land.
unite To join things together into one.
civilization A large, organized society with towns and rulers.
source Evidence that tells us about the past.

KEY PEOPLE

Herodotus Greek traveler and writer who visited Egypt around 450 BC.
Menes (Narmer) Remembered as the king who joined the two lands, c. 3100 BC.
Cleopatra The last pharaoh of Ancient Egypt. She died in 30 BC.
An Egyptian farmer Grew wheat and barley in the mud the flood left behind.

KEY PLACES

River Nile The river that made life in Egypt possible.
The Delta Lower Egypt — the marshy north where the Nile meets the sea.
Upper Egypt The south — up-river, because the Nile flows north.
Giza Where the great pyramids stand, near modern Cairo.
Mediterranean Sea The sea the Nile flows into, in the north.

KEY FACTS

1. Ancient Egypt lasted over 3,000 years, from about 3100 BC to 30 BC.
2. Egypt is mostly desert. Almost everyone lived close to the Nile.
3. The Nile flows from south to north, into the Mediterranean Sea.
4. The Nile is about 6,650 km long — one of the two longest rivers in the world.
5. Every summer the Nile flooded. When the water went down it left rich, dark mud.
6. The Egyptians called their land Kemet, 'the Black Land', after that mud.
7. Farmers grew wheat and barley in the mud the flood left behind.
8. Lower Egypt was in the north (the delta). Upper Egypt was in the south.
9. Around 3100 BC the two lands were joined into one kingdom.
10. The double crown joined the red crown of Lower Egypt and the white crown of Upper Egypt.
11. The Greek writer Herodotus called Egypt 'the gift of the river'.
12. Since the Aswan High Dam was finished in 1970, the Nile no longer floods every year.

BASELINE ASSESSMENT — BEFORE THE UNIT

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Grades 2-3

Name:

Class:

Date:

Instructions (baseline):

- Do your best with each question — even if you have not studied this yet.
- Write "I don't know yet" if you genuinely cannot answer — that is fine for a baseline.
- We will do this paper again at the END of the unit so you can see how much you have learned.

Section A — Short answer

Answer each question in one or two sentences.

1. Roughly when did Ancient Egypt begin, and when did it end? [2 marks]

2. Which way does the River Nile flow? [1 mark]

3. What did the Nile flood leave behind, and why did that matter? [2 marks]

4. What did the Egyptians call their land, and what does the name mean? [2 marks]

5. Was Lower Egypt in the north or the south? Why was it called 'lower'? [2 marks]

6. What did the pharaoh's double crown show? [1 mark]

Section B — Source question

SOURCE

"The Egypt that the Greeks sail to is land that the river has given to the Egyptians — it is the gift of the river. The Egyptians have a climate unlike any other, and a river unlike any other river." — Herodotus, 'The Histories', Book 2, chapters 5 and 35 (written c. 430 BC), put into simpler English for this lesson.

Question: What does Herodotus mean when he calls Egypt 'the gift of the river' — and do you think he is right? Use ONE fact from the lesson. [3 marks]

Section C — Extended write

Your task: Answer the big question: 'Why do we say Ancient Egypt was the gift of the Nile?' Write at least one full paragraph (5-7 sentences).

TICK OFF AS YOU GO

- ☐ States a clear opinion sentence first
- ☐ Explains what the yearly flood did to the land
- ☐ Gives ONE thing the Egyptians grew or did because of the river
- ☐ Uses 'because' or 'so' to explain cause and consequence
- ☐ Uses the Herodotus source as evidence

END-OF-UNIT ASSESSMENT

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Grades 2-3

Name:

Class:

Date:

Instructions:

- Answer all questions in Sections A, B, B2 and C.
- Write in full sentences. Show your knowledge.
- You may use a colored pencil to highlight key words in the source extract.
- Section C is worth the most marks — leave time to plan your paragraph.

Section A — Short answer

Answer each question in one or two sentences.

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MARK SCHEME — TEACHER COPY

The Gift of the Nile — A Grades 2-3 History Lesson

Grades 2-3

Total marks **18**

Sections **A · B · C**

Use this mark scheme alongside the student paper. One-mark questions accept any close paraphrase; two-mark questions need both ideas. Section C is marked against the success criteria, then placed in a band.

Section A — Short answer (mark scheme)

1. Roughly when did Ancient Egypt begin, and when did it end? [2 marks]

Accept: It began about 3100 BC (1 mark) and ended in 30 BC (1 mark).

2. Which way does the River Nile flow? [1 mark]

Accept: North — into the Mediterranean Sea.

3. What did the Nile flood leave behind, and why did that matter? [2 marks]

Accept: Rich, dark mud (1 mark). Crops such as wheat and barley could grow in it (1 mark).

4. What did the Egyptians call their land, and what does the name mean? [2 marks]

Accept: Kemet (1 mark), meaning ‘the Black Land’ (1 mark).

5. Was Lower Egypt in the north or the south? Why was it called ‘lower’? [2 marks]

Accept: The north (1 mark). It is down-river, because the Nile flows north (1 mark).

6. What did the pharaoh’s double crown show? [1 mark]

Accept: That the pharaoh ruled both Upper and Lower Egypt, joined into one land.

Section B — Source question (mark scheme)

SOURCE

"The Egypt that the Greeks sail to is land that the river has given to the Egyptians — it is the gift of the river. The Egyptians have a climate unlike any other, and a river unlike any other river." — Herodotus, 'The Histories', Book 2, chapters 5 and 35 (written c. 430 BC), put into simpler English for this lesson.

Question: What does Herodotus mean when he calls Egypt 'the gift of the river' — and do you think he is right? Use ONE fact from the lesson. [3 marks]

Model answer: He means Egypt could only exist because of the Nile (1 mark). He is right because the yearly flood left rich mud where crops could grow (1 mark), and without it the land would be desert, so nobody could farm (1 mark).

Look for any 3 of: a comment on who wrote it, a comment on what it says, a comment on what it shows about life at the time, an inference beyond the literal words.

Section C — Extended write (mark scheme)

Prompt: Answer the big question: 'Why do we say Ancient Egypt was the gift of the Nile?' Write at least one full paragraph (5-7 sentences). [5 marks]

Success criteria — award one mark per criterion fully evidenced:

- ✓ States a clear opinion sentence first
- ✓ Explains what the yearly flood did to the land
- ✓ Gives ONE thing the Egyptians grew or did because of the river
- ✓ Uses 'because' or 'so' to explain cause and consequence
- ✓ Uses the Herodotus source as evidence

OVERALL BANDS

- Working towards: 0-6
- Expected: 7-12
- Greater depth: 13-18

Total: 18 marks

Terms of use

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Text

All text is written in-house. The Herodotus source is from The Histories, Book 2, chapters 5 and 35 (written about 430 BC), put into simpler English for this lesson and labelled as such where it appears.

Pictures

The pictures are digital illustrations made for this lesson. They are reconstructions to help students imagine the past, not photographs of it.

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