

Reading Comprehension

ANCIENT EGYPT

Crucial to survival in ancient Egypt, was the River Nile. At 6853km long, it is the longest river in the world, starting in the mountains of Tanzania and flowing through most of north-eastern Africa.

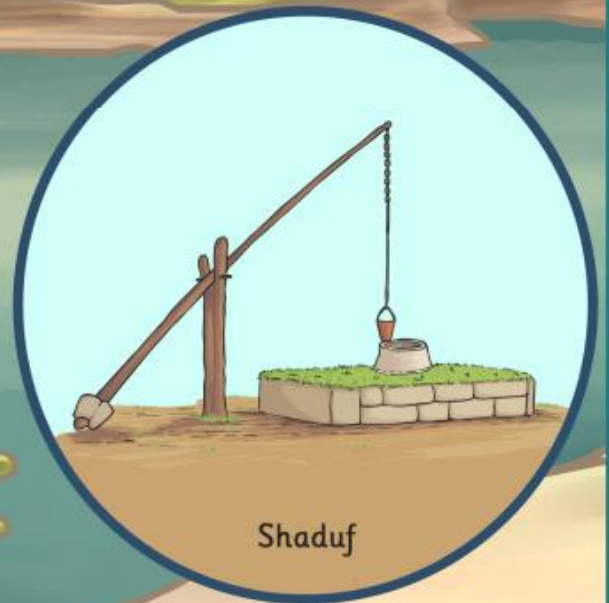
'Black Land'

In ancient times, its fertile soil provided rich nutrients for growing crops, which fed and clothed the people who lived along the banks of the Nile. Some of the food grown was also traded for other goods. The land flooded every year, leaving a thick, black silt on the ground, which made the ground very good for growing plants. This was known as 'black land'.



'Red Land'

Away from the river, Egyptians also needed its 'red land', which was the red, dry desert where nothing could grow. It protected the people of ancient Egypt because it separated the country from neighbouring countries and invading armies. The 'red land' was also rich in precious metals and gems such as gold, copper, granite, limestone, amethyst, alabaster and turquoise.



Shaduf

Egyptian people relied on the water of the River Nile for drinking and washing. A useful crop that grew along the banks of the river was papyrus reeds. They were dried and used to make a type of paper. Travelling along the river were traders, transporting items to other areas, fishermen, looking for a healthy catch and sailors moving materials such as stones for building pyramids.

Pharaohs enjoyed cruising up and down the river in luxury, relaxing in custom built vessels. Meanwhile, ordinary Egyptians created inventive ways of using the river water as extensively as possible. One important invention, still used widely today, was the shaduf. This was designed to scoop water from the river and move it so that it could be sprinkled on the land where crops were growing.

Questions

Think about what type of text this is. How do you know? Once you have read the text carefully, answer the numbered questions in full sentences in your book.

- 1) What does the author mean by 'fertile soil'?
- 2) Find a word in paragraph two that means the same as fine sand or clay.
- 3) If you could choose to live in the 'black land' or the 'red land', which area would you choose to live in and why?
- 4) Why do you think so many Egyptian people lived so close to the banks of the river?
- 5) Why do you think the Egyptians needed to defend themselves from enemies?
- 6) Why is it important to know about the role of the River Nile in ancient Egyptian life?
- 7) How does the illustration help you to understand the text better?