

Ancient Egypt and Kush**Section 1****MAIN IDEAS**

1. Egypt was called the gift of the Nile because the Nile River gave life to the desert.
2. Civilization developed along the Nile after people began farming in this region.
3. Strong kings unified all of Egypt.

Key Terms and People

cataract steep river rapids, almost impossible to sail by boat

delta a triangle-shaped area of land made of soil deposited by a river

Menes an Egyptian leader who united both upper and lower Egypt into one kingdom

pharaoh ruler of unified Egypt, literally means “great house”

dynasty a series of rulers from the same family

Section Summary**THE GIFT OF THE NILE**

Life in Egypt revolved around the Nile, the world’s longest river. The Nile carries water from central Africa through a vast stretch of desert land. It also carries fine black silt. When the river floods, it deposits this fertile soil along its banks. Since the land surrounding the Nile Valley was arid desert, the area along the river was the lifeline for people living in the region. The river was so important to people that Egypt was called the “gift of the Nile.”

Ancient Egypt developed along a 750-mile stretch of the Nile, and was originally organized into two kingdoms—Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Upper Egypt was located upriver in relation to the Nile’s flow. Lower Egypt was the northern region and was located downriver.

Cataracts, or steep rapids, marked the southern border of Upper Egypt. Lower Egypt was centered in the river **delta**, a triangle-shaped area of land made of soil deposited by the river. In midsummer

What gifts did the Nile give to the land along its banks?

How could a cataract serve as a natural protective barrier?

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the Nile would flood Upper Egypt. In the fall the river would flood Lower Egypt.

CIVILIZATION DEVELOPS ALONG THE NILE

With dry desert all around, ancient settlers were attracted to this abundant and protected area of fertile farmland. Hunter-gatherers first moved to the area around 12,000 years ago and found plenty of meat and fish to hunt and eat. By 4500 BC farmers were living in villages and growing wheat and barley. They were also raising cattle and sheep.

Around 3200 BC the Egyptian villages formed into two kingdoms. The capital of Lower Egypt was located in the northwest Nile Delta at a town called Pe. The capital city of Upper Egypt was called Nekhen. It was located on the west bank of the Nile.

Why would hunter-gatherers be attracted to the banks of a river that floods every year?

Why do you think Egyptian farming villages banded together and became kingdoms?

KINGS UNIFY EGYPT

Around 3100 BC **Menes** (MEE-neeZ), the king of Upper Egypt, invaded Lower Egypt. He married a princess there in order to unite the two kingdoms under his rule. Menes was the first **pharaoh**, which literally means ruler of a “great house.” He also started the first Egyptian **dynasty**, or series of rulers from the same family. He built a new capital city, Memphis, which became a popular cultural center. His dynasty ruled for nearly 200 years.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Villages developed when people stopped being hunter-gatherers and start growing their food. Some people in villages became powerful leaders who united several villages and their people into larger territories under one organization. Imagine that you are a village leader in ancient Egypt and that you are interested in uniting several villages. Write a speech explaining why you want to unite the villages and why people should agree with you.

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DIRECTIONS On the line provided before each statement, write **T** if a statement is true and **F** if a statement is false. If the statement is false, write the correct term on the line after each sentence that makes the sentence a true statement.

_____ 1. Cataracts are triangle-shaped areas of land made of soil that is deposited by a river.

_____ 2. Deltas are steep rapids that made sailing portions of rivers such as the Nile very difficult.

_____ 3. Menes was a leader who rose to power in Upper Egypt around 3100 BC.

_____ 4. Menes founded Egypt's first pharaoh, a series of rulers from the same family.

_____ 5. Historians consider Menes to be Egypt's first dynasty, the title used by the rulers of Egypt.
