








Egypt: The Gift of the Nile

Overview:


Students will learn the importance of the Nile River in the formation of Egypt as a nation. They will grind their own wheat flour using a mortar and pestle.

Objectives:














At the end of the lesson students will be able to:

-  **Explain** the natural conditions that led to Egypt becoming a nation.
-  **Name** the two areas where the Nile's water comes from.
-  **List** the reasons the Nile was important to ancient Egyptians.
-  **Explain** how the banks of the Nile provided fertile land for growing crops.
-  **Identify** staple crops in the garden.

Preparation:

-  The suggested snack will need to be prepared prior to the lesson.










Vocabulary:

- | | |
|--|---|
|  nation |  topography |
|  delta |  staple crops |
|  silt |  mortar and pestle |
|  sediment |  receded |
|  papyrus |  winnow |
|  desert |  chaff |
|  famine | |



Learning Activities:

- I. Presentation (20 min.)
 - A. Ask students to recount why Mesopotamia had been an ideal place for a society to develop. (It had reliable access to water, fertile soil, and good


Materials:

-  Map of the world
-  Map of Northeastern Africa
-  A container of silt
-  Photos of papyrus or a potted papyrus plant (It will need to be watered regularly but does not actually need to grow in water.)
-  Picture of a papyrus boat
-  Photo of a statue of a woman grinding wheat
-  Stalks of grain with berries to grind
-  Mortar and pestle for each group of students
-  Jar of whole wheat flour

On the Board:

-  Vocabulary
-  Student Reflection Questions

Suggested Snack:

-  Cleopatra's Dulcis Cocola: <https://www.finedininglovers.com/recipes/dessert/ancient-egyptian-food-recipe/>

- topography* for agriculture— large flat space that allowed them to grow crops.)
- B. Ask students if they know of another ancient society that had the same favorable conditions for building a settlement? (Egypt)
- Ask a student to point out Egypt on the world map. Ask them what continent Egypt is in. (Africa)
 - Show students an enlarged map of Egypt. Ask a student to trace the route of the Nile River from south to north.
- C. Give students some background information on the Nile.
- The Nile flows north from deep in Africa to the Mediterranean Sea, creating a long fertile valley.
 - The river ends at the Mediterranean Sea in a *delta*: an area of sediment (silt: good soil for growing plants) deposited at the mouth of a river.
 - The Ethiopian mountains had much winter snow which in the springtime melted and flooded down into the Nile River. The Egyptians believed that the Nile flooded every year from Isis's tears as she cried for her dead husband, Osiris. Isis was the Egyptian goddess of health, marriage, and wisdom.
 - If there was little snowfall in a given year this meant there would be a smaller flood and possibly famine.
 - Also at that time, Lake Victoria in the south was fed by small streams of melted snow which overflowed into the Nile.
 - As the weather warmed up, the Nile receded, leaving behind *silt*: very healthy soil.
 - Just like in Mesopotamia, Egyptians learned how to irrigate their land in order to control water flow and grow crops.
 - Also, like in Mesopotamia, the Nile already had wild vegetation and wildlife.
- D. Pass around the container of silt so students can see/touch it.
- E. In addition to agriculture, ask students what the Egyptians used the Nile for?
- Unlike the nearby Mediterranean Sea, the Nile is a fresh water river. So people could use the water for drinking and cooking.
 - Additionally, they used the river to travel to other villages and cities by boat. This allowed them to trade crops with other settlements.
 - The ability to travel easily meant that as more settlements developed along the river, people all along the Nile shared a common language, culture and history. This led to the formation of Egypt, the world's first *nation*: a large aggregate of people united by common genetic descent, history, culture, and language, inhabiting a particular territory.
- F. Though the land around the Nile was fertile, it was surrounded by *deserts*: a barren area of land where little rain occurs and consequently living

conditions are hostile for plant and animal life. Ask: Why was this beneficial? (The deserts provided protection to people in the Nile settlements, as invaders did not want to cross the desert.) The Nile was the only significant source of water in the area.

- G. Ask students to define *staple crops*: crops that are eaten regularly and in such large quantities that they constitute a dominant portion of a standard diet in a given society. They supply a large portion of nutrient and energy needs.
- Ask students if they can identify Egypt's staple crops: wheat and barley.
 - Ask: How can crops be useful in addition to food? (In Egypt, papyrus was an important industrial crop. People ate the roots and used the stems to make baskets, roofs, rope, paper, pens, and boats.)
- H. Show students pictures of a papyrus plant (or an actual papyrus plant) and a papyrus boat.
2. Cooking Activity: Making Flour (20 min.)
- A. Show students a stem of wheat with berries and a jar of flour. Ask students how they think we get flour from wheat.
 - B. Take a basket and "winnow" the chaff from the wheat berries by shaking the berries up and down so that the chaff (outside layer of the berries) is separated from them.
 - C. Demonstrate how to use a mortar and pestle to grind the wheat berries into flour.
 - D. Show the photo of an Egyptian statue of a woman grinding wheat.
 - E. Assist students as they try grinding some wheat berries.
3. Snack: Serve Cleopatra's Dulcis Coccola warm. Tell students this is a popular dessert from ancient Egypt made of flour, honey, dried figs, nuts and pomegranate. (5 min.)
4. Have students answer the Reflection Questions in their garden journals. (5 min.)

Student Reflection Questions:

1. Think about your own diet. What is the "staple" crop in your diet? What foods do you eat regularly that contain wheat?
2. Can you think of another plant, like papyrus, that has many uses besides providing food?
3. Where does the water in our city come from?
4. How did your thinking change about the importance of water and our access to it?

Assessment Questions:

1. What is a staple crop?
 - **Crops that are eaten regularly and in such large quantities that they are a large portion of a standard diet in a given society. They provide a large portion of nutrient and energy needs.**
2. What was Ancient Egypt's main staple crop?
 - **Wheat (or barley)**

Standards:

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.





