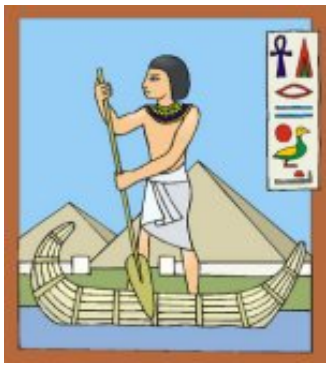
The Nile and Ancient Egypt

By Vickie Chao

longest	headwaters	leading	silt
equal-sized	traveling	long	fluctuation
existence	form	aspect	civilization
akhet	layer	region	travels
dominant			

Directions: Fill in each blank with the word that best completes the reading comprehension.



About 5,000 years ago, there was an ancient civilization slowly taking root in Africa. That *(1)* _____ lasted more than 3,000 years. When it finally folded, it left behind a rich culture and some of the world's most fascinating structures. Amazingly, this civilization owed much of its *(2)* _____ to a river that flowed right through its land. That river is the Nile, and it nurtured the ancient Egyptian civilization.

The Nile is the longest river in Africa. It is also the *(3)* _____ river in the world. Stretching more than 4,100 miles *(4)* _____ , the river *(5)* _____ from south to north. It passes through nine countries along the way before it finally drains into the Mediterranean Sea.

Like many great rivers, the Nile is made up of several smaller rivers. Its three main streams are the Blue Nile, the White Nile, and the Atbara. The Nile *(6)* _____ begin in the Ethiopian highlands. Every year between June and September, melting snow and heavy rainfall in that *(7)* _____ would swell the Nile and created floods. This once-a-year overflow (called "*(8)* _____ ") had been going on for thousands of years. It was eventually stopped after the Aswan High Dam was opened in 1970.

The ancient Egyptians had no idea about the real cause of akhet. They thought it was an act of a god named Hapi. They believed that when Hapi made his annual visit in the *(9)* _____ of floods, he left behind a *(10)* _____ of black, rich soil. This layer of *(11)* _____ was perfect for growing vegetation. As soon as the

water receded in October, Egyptian farmers set out to plant. They harvested their produce around March, right before the drought season started.

Because the Nile helped irrigate crops and its overflows brought in fertile soil, the ancient Egyptians monitored the *(12)* _____ of the Nile very closely. They feared a low flood as much as a high one. In either case, it meant not enough food and starvation! To measure and predict the water depth, the ancient Egyptians designed the "Nilometer." A Nilometer came in various shapes. It could be a vertical column submerged in the water. Or it could be a flight of *(13)* _____ stairs *(14)* _____ down into the river. Regardless what it looked like, it always had markings on the side to indicate how deep the water was.

Aside from using the Nile for farming, the ancient Egyptians also relied on it for fishing, *(15)* _____ , and trading. When they moved upstream (from north to south), they would raise the sails and let the *(16)* _____ wind push the ships forward against the current. When they moved downstream (from south to north), they would simply lower the sails and allow the current to carry them to their final destinations.

With everything considered, the Nile was very important to the ancient Egyptians. It touched or affected almost every *(17)* _____ of their lives. Because of this, many people refer to the Nile as the “cradle of civilization”!
