

A THE GIFT OF THE NILE

In ancient times, there were actually two Egypts. Upper Egypt began at the cataracts, or rock-filled rapids in southern Egypt. Lower Egypt, to the north, included the lowlands of the Nile Delta.

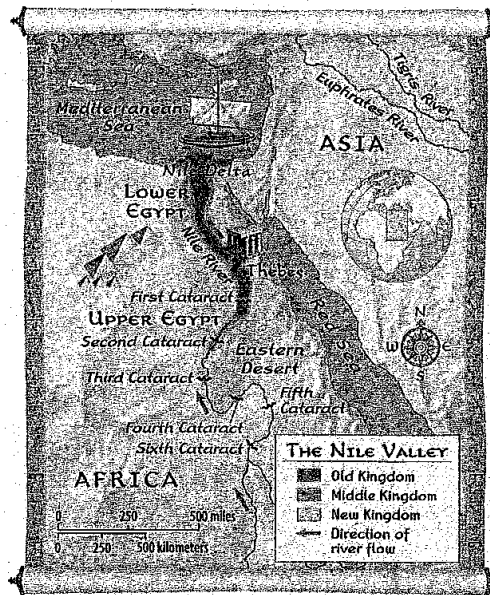
Deserts! Cataracts! It might seem that geography was hard on Egypt. Actually, geography helped the Egyptians. First, the Nile River was a water “highway” for travel. Also, harsh deserts prevented attacks from the east or west.

The Annual Flood

The Nile River begins in the highlands of Africa, south of Egypt. Every summer heavy rains pour down on the highlands and run off into the Nile. The rainwaters carry off rich topsoil from the highlands. Nile floods carry this topsoil to Egypt each summer. The timing of the floods could be predicted, but the size of the floods could not. Some years, less rain meant smaller floods and less rich topsoil. Other years, heavy rains caused destructive floods. No wonder Hapi, the Nile god, and Khnemu, the flood god, were two of the most important gods of ancient Egypt!

Using Mathematics

Each year, Nile floodwaters covered fields and villages. After floodwaters ran off, Egyptians had to figure out which farmer owned which land. The Egyptians used a kind of mathematics called



Map Skill

REGION Which Egyptian kingdom was the largest?

geometry to locate each farmer’s field. You may be using geometry in your math classes today!

QUICK CHECK

Sequence Events Describe the series of events that happen when the Nile River floods.