

The River That Started Everything

Maya spread her map on the kitchen table while her grandfather stirred soup on the stove. "Ms. Okafor says ancient Egypt grew right next to the Nile River," Maya said. "Why there?" Her grandfather smiled. "Because rivers gave people water for crops, fish to eat, and a way to travel by boat. Same for Rome, which grew up along the Tiber River a short way inland, with a port at the coast that let ships trade across the Mediterranean. Same for China, along its rivers." "So the land decided where people lived?" "Mostly. But when a volcano erupted near Pompeii, people had to move away completely. Others built things like aqueducts to bring water where there wasn't any." Maya wrote it down. "So people changed too, not just the land." "Exactly. Land and people shape each other," he said. "It's the same story here in Canada — many of our towns and cities grew up along rivers and coastlines too, for those very same reasons."

Words to know

- **aqueduct:** a human-made channel or bridge built to carry water from one place to another
- **settlement:** a place where people build homes and live together
- **environmental change:** a shift in nature, like a flood or volcanic eruption, that affects where and how people live

Listen and check your understanding

1. Why did ancient Egypt, Rome, and China grow up near rivers?
2. What happened to the people living near Pompeii when the volcano erupted?
3. What is an aqueduct, and why did some ancient peoples build them?
4. According to Maya's grandfather, how are Canadian settlements similar to ancient ones along rivers?
5. In your own words, explain what Maya's grandfather means when he says, "Land and people shape each other."

Answer key

1. Rivers gave people water for crops, fish to eat, and a way to travel by boat.
2. They had to move away completely.
3. An aqueduct is a human-made channel or bridge built to carry water from one place to another; some ancient peoples built them to bring water where there wasn't any.
4. Many Canadian towns and cities also grew up along rivers and coastlines for the same reasons — water, food, and transportation.
5. Answers will vary, but should note that the land affects where and how people live, while people also change the land to meet their needs.

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