EGYPT AND THE NILE RIVER

1) The Nile River flows through how many different countries in Africa?

   a.) 12    b.) 9    c.) 3    d.) 2

    Answer: b

   The Nile and its tributaries flow though nine countries. The White Nile flows though Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt. The Blue Nile starts in Ethiopia. Zaire, Kenya, Tanzanian, Rwanda, and Burundi all have tributaries, which flow into the Nile or into Lake Victoria Nyanes.

   It has its origins in Burundi, south of the equator, and flows northward (therefore, the southern land is known as Upper Egypt and the northern land is known as Lower Egypt…weird, eh? Much different from our perspective north of the Equator!) through northeastern Africa, eventually flowing through Egypt and finally draining into the Mediterranean Sea. Three principal streams form the Nile. In Ethiopia's highlands, water flows from the Blue Nile and the Atbara. Headstreams of the White Nile flow into Lake Victoria and Lake Albert. The Nile River basin is immense and occupies an area about one-tenth of the continent of Africa. It includes portions of Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, The Sudan, and Egypt. It is estimated to drain an area of 1,293,000 square miles.

2) The Nile River is the longest river in the world. True or False?

    Answer: True…sort-of.

   The Nile is usually considered the longest river in the world, but whether the Nile is actually longer than South America's Amazon still remains the subject of much debate. This is, for the most part, due to two reasons: first, the lengths of rivers vary over time and, second, the point from which the length of a river is measured is not always agreed upon. The Nile also carries far less water than the Amazon.

   It’s official length is: (From White Nile Source to Mouth) 4184 miles.
3) The name “Nile” means:

a.) valley   b.) black   c.) waters   d.) life

Answer: a

The Nile receives its name from the Greek “Neilos”, which means a valley or river valley. The river flowed northward and flooded the lands in Egypt, leaving behind black sediment. As a result the ancient Egyptians called the river Ar or Aur (black). The Greeks and Egyptians also gave the land its oldest name Kem or Kemi, which also translates into black. The river's water and the fertile soil along its banks created the perfect setting for the evolution of the civilizations that existed in the ancient world. The ancient peoples that lived along the river's banks cultivated the art of agriculture and were one the first to utilize the plow.

Throughout the year, the Nile serves as a constant source of water. This enables farming along its banks in spite of the high temperatures that occur. In those regions, especially The Sudan, where there is enough rainfall to support cultivation, the high temperatures evaporate enough of the water making irrigation necessary. In addition to its vital role in agriculture, its waterways also play a major role in transportation. During seasonal flooding it enables transportation to those areas where road access is not possible.

During the 20th century, dependence on the waterways as a sole source of transportation has been reduced as facilities for air, rail and highways have expanded.

4) The majority of the people of Egypt live in the fertile area along the Nile banks. The band of farmland is about how many miles wide?

a.) 75   b.) 50   c.) 17   d.) 24

Answer: d

The narrow band of farmland is usually less than 24 miles wide! The areas away from the river are desert lands where few humans live. These deserts (deshrets) kept Egypt isolated allowing the civilization to flourish for more than 3,000 years.

Most of the water carried by the Nile (about 85%) originates from Ethiopia, but this runoff only happens in summer, when the great rains fall on the Ethiopian Plateau; the rest of the year the great rivers draining Ethiopia to the Nile (Sobat, Blue Nile, and Atbara) flow weakly or are dry.

See the satellite photo below. Note the contrast between the dry desert and the fertile green areas along the Nile.
5) The true source of the Nile River was discovered in what century?

   a.) 20th  b.) 16th  c.) 19th  d.) 14th

   Answer: c, but read to see recent expedition info!

Despite the attempts of the Greeks and Romans (who were unable to penetrate the Sudd), the source of the Nile was unknown until the 19th century, when John Hanning Speke was the first to identify it as Lake Victoria. Various earlier expeditions since ancient times had failed to determine the river's source, thus yielding classical Hellenistic and Roman representations of the river as a male god with his face and head obscured in drapery.

Speke was part of a 1856–1858 expedition led by Richard Francis Burton to search for the source of the Nile by entering Africa from Dar-Es-Salam (modern Tanzania). Burton was convinced that Lake Tanganyika was the source, but it was Speke who, leaving a sick Burton behind, found the large body of water now known as Lake Victoria and convinced himself that this was the Nile's true source. Speke returned with James Augustus Grant in 1860-1863 for further explorations around Lake Victoria and traced the Nile northwards to Gondokoro, on the southern boundary of the Sudd.

The White Nile Expedition, led by South African national Hendri Coetzee, was to become the first to navigate the Nile in its entire length. The expedition took off from The Source of the Nile in Uganda on January 17, 2004 and arrived safely at the Mediterranean in Rosetta, Egypt, 4 months and 2 weeks later. National Geographic are releasing a feature film about the expedition in towards the end of 2005, to be entitled The Longest River.

On April 28, 2004, geologist Pasquale Scaturro and his partner, kayaker and documentary filmmaker Gordon Brown became the first people to navigate the Blue Nile, from Lake Tana in Ethiopia to the beaches of Alexandria on the Mediterranean. Though their expedition included a number of others, Brown and Scaturro were the only ones to remain on the expedition for the entire journey. They chronicled their adventure with an IMAX camera and two handheld video cams, sharing their story in the IMAX film "Mystery of the Nile," and in a book of the same title. Despite this attempt, the team was forced to use outboard motors for most of their journey and it was not until January 29, 2005 when Canadian Les Jickling and New Zealander Mark Tanner reached the Mediterranean Sea that the river had been paddled for the first time under human power.

The Nile still supports much of the population of Africans living along its banks, as well as Egyptians; the latter living between otherwise inhospitable regions of the Sahara Desert. The river flooded every summer, depositing fertile soil on the fields. The flow of the river is disturbed at several points by cataracts, which are sections of faster flowing water with many small islands, shallow water, and rocks, forming an obstacle to navigation by boats. The sudd in the Sudan also forms a formidable obstacle for navigation and flow of water, to the extent that Egypt had once attempted to dig a canal (the Jongeli Canal) to improve the flow of this stagnant mass of water (also known as Lake No).
5) The ancient Egyptians were pioneers in what field(s)?

a.) astronomy   b.) engineering   c.) surgery   d) all

Answer: d

Under the 4th Dynasty, Egyptian civilization reached a peak in its development, and this high level was generally maintained in the 5th and 6th dynasties. The splendor of the engineering feats of the pyramids was approximated in every other field of endeavor, including architecture, sculpture, painting, navigation, the industrial arts and sciences, and astronomy; Memphite astronomers first created a solar calendar based on a year of 365 days. (COOL, eh?) Old Kingdom physicians also displayed a remarkable knowledge of physiology, surgery, the circulatory system of the body, and antiseptics.

EGYPT

Sites, Facts and Mythology

The Great Pyramids at Giza - These are the most famous of the Egyptian Pyramids for they are pyramids that worked, and the largest pyramid, the pyramid of Cheops, is the largest man made structure ever built. The outstanding group of pyramids in Egypt is at Giza, near Cairo. The largest, the Great Pyramid, was built as the tomb of the Pharaoh Khufu and is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. When built, the Great Pyramid measured 147 m (481 ft) high with a square base measuring 230 m (756 ft) on each side.
The remains of about 70 pyramids may still be seen in Egypt and the Sudan. The prototype of the true pyramid in Egypt was the step pyramid, so called because its successive layers of stone suggest a series of enormous steps. The most famous and best preserved of the step pyramids is that at Saqqara, near Cairo, built about 2700 BC.

The Great Sphinx of Giza
The most famous of all Egyptian sphinxes is the Great Sphinx of Giza, near the pyramids. In ancient Egypt, sphinxes were statues representing deities, with the body of a lion and the head of some other animal or of man, frequently a likeness of the king. Dating from before 2500 BC, the Great Sphinx is about 20 m (66 ft) high and about 73 m (240 ft) long.

The Step Pyramid of Zoser - The step pyramid is one of the first pyramids. As time went on, ancient Egyptians learned new techniques in building pyramids,
and worked their way up to the perfect, smooth sided pyramids at Giza. The step pyramid of King Zoser at Saqqara, Egypt, was built about 2737-2717 BC, the 3rd dynasty. It was designed by Imhotep, the first known architect in history, who was later deified by the Egyptians. The pyramid was the first monumental royal tomb and is one of the oldest stone structures in Egypt.

### Temple at Abu Simbel

The amazing thing about the Abu Simbel Temple was that it was built out of one piece of stone, a mountain. There were no additional blocks brought in or added. Inside are massive pillars and large chambers. Unfortunately, due to the building of a dam, engineers had to move the temple to higher ground or it would become immersed in the water. This meant that they had to cut up the temple into several blocks and move it, so it is no longer one solid piece.
Egyptian Mythology, the body of beliefs constituting religion in ancient Egypt. The religious beliefs of the ancient Egyptians were the dominating influence in the development of their culture, although a true religion, in the sense of a unified theological system, never existed among them. The Egyptian faith was based on an unorganized collection of ancient myths, nature worship, and innumerable deities. In the most influential and famous of these myths a divine hierarchy is developed and the creation of the earth is explained.

Creation
According to the Egyptian account of creation, only the ocean existed at first. Then Ra, the sun, came out of an egg (a flower, in some versions) that appeared on the surface of the water. Ra brought forth four children, the gods Shu and Geb and the goddesses Tefnut and Nut. Shu and Tefnut became the atmosphere. They stood on Geb, who became the earth, and raised up Nut, who became the sky. Ra ruled over all. Geb and Nut later had two sons, Set and Osiris, and two daughters, Isis and Nephthys. Osiris succeeded Ra as king of the earth, helped by Isis, his sister-wife. Set, however, hated his brother and killed him. Isis then embalmed her husband's body with the help of the god Anubis, who thus became the god of embalming. The powerful charms of Isis resurrected Osiris, who became king of the netherworld, the land of the dead. Horus, who was the son of Osiris and Isis, later defeated Set in a great battle and became king of the earth.

Local Gods
From this myth of creation came the conception of the ennead, a group of nine divinities, and the triad, consisting of a divine father, mother, and son. Every local temple in Egypt possessed its own ennead and triad. The greatest ennead, however, was that of Ra and his children and grandchildren. This group was worshipped at Heliopolis, the center of sun worship in the Egyptian world. The origin of the local deities is obscure; some of them were taken over from foreign
religions, and some were originally the animal gods of prehistoric Africa. Gradually, they were all fused into a complicated religious structure, although comparatively few local divinities became important throughout Egypt. In addition to those already named, the important divinities included the gods Amon, Thoth, Ptah, Khnemu, and Hapi, and the goddesses Hathor, Mut, Neit, and Sekhet. Their importance increased with the political ascendancy of the localities where they were worshipped. For example, the ennead of Memphis was headed by a triad composed of the father Ptah, the mother Sekhet, and the son Imhotep. Therefore, during the Memphite dynasties, Ptah became one of the greatest gods in Egypt. Similarly, when the Theban dynasties ruled Egypt, the ennead of Thebes was given the most importance, headed by the father Amon, the mother Mut, and the son Khonsu. As the religion became more involved, true deities were sometimes confused with human beings who had been glorified after death. Thus, Imhotep, who was originally the chief minister of the 3rd Dynasty ruler Zoser, was later regarded as a demigod. During the 5th Dynasty the pharaohs began to claim divine ancestry and from that time on were worshipped as sons of Ra. Minor gods, some merely demons, were also given places in local divine hierarchies.

**Iconography**
The Egyptian gods were represented with human torsos and human or animal heads. Sometimes the animal or bird expressed the characteristics of the god. Ra, for example, had the head of a hawk, and the hawk was sacred to him because of its swift flight across the sky; Hathor, the goddess of love and laughter, was given the head of a cow, which was sacred to her; Anubis was given the head of a jackal because these animals ravaged the desert graves in ancient times; Mut was vulture-headed and Thoth was ibis-headed; and Ptah was given a human head, although he was occasionally represented as a bull, called Apis. Because of the gods to which they were attached, the sacred animals were venerated, but they were never worshipped until the decadent 26th Dynasty. The gods were also represented by symbols, such as the sun disc and hawk wings that were worn on the headdress of the pharaoh.

**Sun Worship**
The only important god who was worshipped with consistency was Ra, chief of cosmic deities, from whom early Egyptian kings claimed descent. Beginning with the Middle Kingdom (2134-1668 BC), Ra worship acquired the status of a state religion, and the god was gradually fused with Amon during the Theban dynasties, becoming the supreme god Amon-Ra. During the 18th Dynasty the pharaoh Amenhotep III renamed the sun god Aton, an ancient term for the physical solar force. Amenhotep's son and successor, Amenhotep IV, instituted a revolution in Egyptian religion by proclaiming Aton the true and only god. He changed his own name to Akhenaton, meaning Aton is satisfied. This first great monotheist was so iconoclastic that he had the plural word gods deleted from monuments, and he relentlessly persecuted the priests of Amon. Although it exerted a great influence on the art and thinking of his time, Akhenaton's sun religion failed to survive and Egypt returned to the ancient, labyrinthine religion of polytheism after Akhenaton's death.

**Burial Ritual**
Burying the dead was of religious concern in Egypt, and Egyptian funerary rituals and equipment eventually became the most elaborate the world has ever known. The Egyptians believed that the vital life-force was composed of several psychical elements, of which the most important was the ka. The ka, a duplicate of the body, accompanied the body throughout life and, after death, departed from the body to take its place in the kingdom of the dead. The ka, however, could not exist without the body; every effort had to be made, therefore, to preserve the corpse. Bodies were embalmed and mummified according to a traditional method supposedly begun by Isis, who mummified her husband Osiris (see Embalming). In addition, wood or stone replicas of the body were put into the tomb to act as a substitute in the event of the mummy being destroyed. The greater the number of statue-duplicates in his or her tomb, the more chances the dead person had of resurrection. As a final protection, exceedingly elaborate tombs were erected to protect the corpse and its equipment. See Egyptian Art and Architecture.

After leaving the tomb, the souls of the dead were supposedly beset by innumerable dangers, and the tombs were therefore furnished with a copy of the Book of the Dead. Part of this book, a guide to the world of the dead, consists of charms designed to overcome these dangers. After arriving in the kingdom of the dead, the ka was judged by Osiris, the king of the dead, and 42 demon assistants. The Book of the Dead also contains instructions for proper conduct before these judges. If the judges decided the deceased had been a sinner, the ka was condemned to hunger and thirst or to be torn to pieces by horrible executioners. If the decision was favourable, the ka went to the heavenly realm of the fields of Yaru, where grain grew more than twice the height of a man and existence was a glorified version of life on earth. All the necessities for this paradisiacal existence, from furniture to reading matter, were, therefore, put into the tombs. As a payment for the afterlife and his benevolent protection, Osiris required the dead to perform tasks for him, such as working in the grain fields. Even this duty could, however, be obviated by placing small statuettes, called ushabtis, into the tomb to serve as substitutes for the deceased.