

## Key Vocabulary

**Cataract** – place on a river where the water falls down a waterfall or through narrow, rocky rapids

**Embankment** – mound of earth or stone alongside a river, made to protect the area behind it from flooding

**Export** – take to another country, usually to be sold

**Import** – bring from another country, usually to be sold

**Peninsula** – piece of land surrounded on nearly all sides by water, and connected to a larger area of land by a narrow strip of land

**Rapids** – steep section of a river, sometime with rocks in the river channel, where the water flow is fast

**Settlement** – area where people build places to live

## Borders of ancient Egypt

To the west, south and east ancient Egypt was surrounded by huge areas of **desert**.

The **Red Sea** beyond the eastern desert separates Egypt and Arabia (now Saudi Arabia).

To the north of Egypt is the **Mediterranean Sea**. This means that ancient Egypt's only land bridge to other civilisations was the **narrow strip of land in the northeastern corner** of the country. This was Egypt's link to the Sinai Peninsula and other empires in Asia, such as those of Persia and Mesopotamia. Desert and water, which were difficult to cross, kept Egyptians separated from other peoples. From its source in the middle of Africa the Nile flows down some waterfalls and rock rapids (cataracts) that were difficult to sail through so it gave Egyptians protection from invaders from the south. At first the Egyptians felt safe and therefore had only small armies. The isolated location of Egypt allowed Egyptian society and culture to develop for thousands of years without interference or influence from other cultures.



## Beginnings of ancient Egypt

- Villages near the Nile River were grouped into two kingdoms:

1. **Upper Egypt** (south of Lower Egypt on the map)
2. **Lower Egypt**.

- The kingdoms of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt joined together and this was the start of the ancient Egyptian civilization.

- Early kings created a capital city called **Memphis** in the southern part of the **Nile Delta**.

## Climate of ancient Egypt

- Hot and dry and it hardly ever rains (same as today)

- The water in the Nile River flows from lands farther south that receive more rainfall.

- The hot, dry desert was excellent for preserving dead bodies, so tombs were built in desert areas, not too far from the **Nile Valley** because Egyptians like having their dead buried close to the living. They also did not want to use valuable farmland for tombs and did not want the tombs to be flooded, which might have happened if they had been built in the valley.

## Resources in ancient Egypt

- Egyptians used resources that they could find in desert areas.

- Most of the mines were located in the strip of desert between the Nile River and the Red Sea.

- They mined for **gold** and other metals, **gemstones** and **salts**. They also mined **huge blocks of different types of stones** which they used for buildings such as pyramids and temples.

- Egyptians used oases in the desert as stopping points along trade routes to the west. Some oases gave refuge to people banished by Egyptians rulers.

- During the years of low flooding, when the crops failed, Egyptians had to trade with other countries to get grain.

- Egyptians exported: wine, linen, papyrus and gold as well as grain in good years.

- Egyptians imported: oils, resin, silver, copper, horses, spices and wood.

1. What was the first capital of ancient Egypt called?  
a) Cairo                      b) Memphis                      c) Thebes                      d) Giza
2. Why were tombs built in desert areas?  
a) The hot, dry conditions were best for preserving remains.                      c) Most people lived in deserts and wanted to be near tombs.  
b) The soil was fertile and the tombs could sit in lush gardens.                      d) People used irrigation to get water close to the tombs.
3. What lays north of Egypt?  
a) Red Sea                      b) River Nile                      c) Mediterranean Sea                      d) Desert
4. What is a peninsula?  
a) Steep section of a river                      c) Area where people build places to live  
b) Piece of land surrounded on nearly all sides by water                      d) Mound of earth alongside a river
5. How did the ancient Egyptians use the deserts?  
a) They lived there                      b) They planted crops there                      c) They mined for gold and different stones  
c) They built oases
6. Which direction of Egypt is Red Sea  
a) North                      b) East                      c) South                      d) West
7. What was climate in ancient Egypt like?  
a) it was colder than today                      b) it was hotter than today                      c) it rained more than today                      d) it was the same as today
8. Where does river Nile have its source?  
a) in Egypt                      d) in Mediterranean sea                      c) in the middle of Africa                      d) in Persia
9. What did the ancient Egyptians export out of their country?  
a) gold                      b) horses                      c) spices                      d) wood