



## Flooding The Nile

Every year, for thousands of years, the Nile River flooded. There is an annual monsoon between May and August that rages in the Ethiopian Highlands. The rainfall in these mountains flows away in the Blue Nile and Atbarah River. It eventually reaches the Nile River. These rivers are responsible for providing nearly 90% of the Nile's water during this time. For the rest of the year, they are much smaller.

The Ancient Egyptians knew all about the flooding of the Nile. In fact, they relied on it to sustain their people. Specially trained men would travel to Aswan and take readings of the river higher up in its course. These readings would be taken down into the lower parts of the kingdom. Experts could predict when the flood would hit. Unfortunately, they couldn't calculate how big each flood would be.

One of the most important things about the flood was that it brought significant amounts of silt and sediment with it. This provided nourishment for the fields. Farmers grew their crops along the river banks because of this. Without the silt and sediment, farmers were unable to grow enough crops to feed the villages and towns of Ancient Egypt. In some years, the flood was small. This often resulted in a famine for the country and many people died. Early Ancient Egyptians would wait for the fields to flood and then work hard to remove the water and start planting. They changed their methods 7,000 years ago when they developed the basin irrigation method.

The basin irrigation method revolutionised how the Egyptians used the river to help farm the land. They began by dividing the land into large fields. Each field was surrounded by dams and low walls called dykes. These walls were closed off once the river flooded. This trapped the water inside each field. They were kept closed for 45 days. This allowed the water time to saturate the soil and for all the sediment and silt to sink into the ground to add nourishment. Once this had happened, the walls were opened again. The water flowed into lower fields or back into the Nile. This was an incredibly successful way of farming in such a harsh environment. The temperatures in Egypt are so hot that the soil dries out quickly. There would have been no way to grow



enough crops without the annual flooding.

Egypt continued to be flooded by the Nile in this way until the 1900s. Various attempts were made before then to control the river. It was the building of the Aswan Dam in 1970 that finally brought the Nile River under control. Nowadays the Egyptians celebrate the flood with a two-week annual holiday beginning on the 15th of August.



## VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a word that tells you something happens once a year.
2. Find a word that tells you that the Ancient Egyptians needed something to happen.
3. What does the phrase “provided nourishment for the fields” mean?
4. What does the word “revolutionised” mean in this context?
5. Find and copy a phrase that tells you the basin irrigation method worked well.

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Why was it important that the Ancient Egyptians used the flood water for their crops?

R

Which rivers are responsible for 90% of the Nile’s water during the monsoon?

R

For how long did the Ancient Egyptians leave the fields to soak?

S

Which would happen first, the soaking of the fields or the monsoon?

E

Is this text structured in chronological or non-chronological order? How do you know?