

it impossible for people to travel by ship upstream from Egypt.

Upper and Lower Egypt Below the cataracts, the Nile flows through a narrow valley lined with cliffs. This region is known as Upper Egypt because it is upstream from the Mediterranean Sea.

The river carries silt—fine mineral particles that can form fertile soil—from its sources in East Africa. Near the end of its journey, the Nile slows down and fans out into many streams and marshy areas. As it slows, the river drops its silt. Over thousands of years, this silt has built up to form a large river delta. A **delta** is an area of sediment—soil or minerals carried by water—deposited at the mouth of a river. The Nile delta forms the region known as Lower Egypt.

Floods and the Black Land A narrow strip of fertile soil lines both banks of the Nile and covers its delta. This rich, dark soil was so important to the Egyptians that they called their country *Kemet*, which means “the Black Land.”

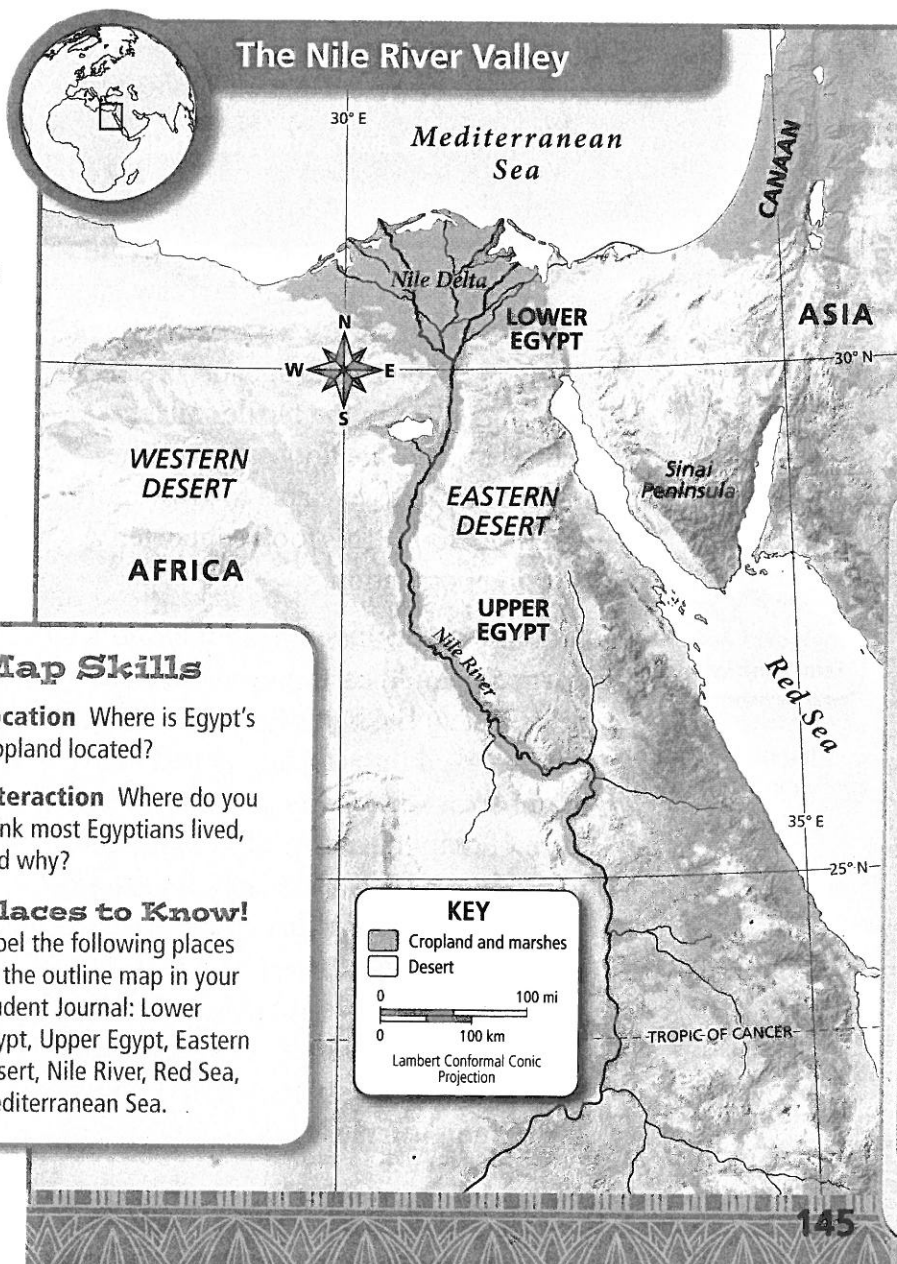
The yearly flooding of the Nile created the Black Land. Each summer, heavy rainfall in East Africa poured into the Nile’s sources. Flood waters surged through Egypt. When the flood waters drained away, they left behind a layer of fresh soil.

However, the Nile floods were unpredictable. If too much water came, the floods could be a natural disaster that swept away soil. If too little water came,

Egypt could suffer a drought, or a shortage of water. Droughts could bring hunger by causing crops to fail.

The Red Land On either side of the Black Land lay vast deserts. Egyptians called these deserts “the Red Land.” Unlike the Black Land, the Red Land was a deadly place of hot, burning sands.

Reading Check What are the sources of the Nile River?



Section 1

Egypt Under the Pharaohs

Key Ideas

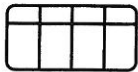
- Egypt's unique geography helped shape its civilization and farming methods.
- Pharaohs belonging to dynasties ruled Egypt and were seen as gods.
- Egyptians worshiped many gods.

Key Terms

- cataract
- delta
- artisan
- pharaoh
- dynasty
- bureaucracy
- mummy



Visual Glossary



Reading Skill Identify Main Ideas and Details Take notes using the graphic organizer in your journal.

Coffin mask of Pharaoh Tutankhamen ▼



Like the Fertile Crescent, Egypt was home to one of the world's first great civilizations. As in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt's civilization developed in a river valley with rich soil. However, Egypt's geography and culture differed in many ways from those of the Fertile Crescent.

The Nile River Valley

The ancient Egyptians treasured the Nile River. They knew that without the Nile, their land would be nothing but a sun-baked desert of bright blue skies and dry sand.

The World's Longest River The Nile is the world's longest river. It begins in East Africa and flows about 3,500 miles north to the Mediterranean Sea.

This great river has two main sources—the White Nile and the Blue Nile. The White Nile flows from Lake Victoria. The Blue Nile rushes down from the highlands of present-day Ethiopia. The two rivers meet in present-day Sudan. In ancient times, northern Sudan was known as Nubia, or Kush.

In Nubia and Egypt, the Nile flows through the Sahara, a vast desert that stretches across most of northern Africa. Before reaching Egypt, the river in ancient times roared through six **cataracts**, or groups of rocky rapids. The rocky cataracts made