Egypt: The Gift of the Nile

Document Based Question

The question is based on the accompanying documents on the following pages. This question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Some of these have been edited for the purpose of this task. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and any point of view that may be presented in the document.

Directions:
• Analyze the documents and answer the questions that follow each document.
• Read the essay question and plan your essay using two column notes.
• Write a well-organized essay that includes an introductory paragraph, a body with several paragraphs explaining and supporting your answer, and a concluding paragraph.
• Use evidence from the documents to support your essay.
• Include specific related outside information in your essay.

Historical Context:
The waters of the mighty Nile River allowed the otherwise dry land of Egypt to become a cradle for one of the world’s greatest ancient civilizations. For tens of thousands of years the focal point of Egyptian life has been the Nile. Egypt is truly the gift of the Nile.

Task:

For Part A, read each document carefully and answer the question or questions after each document. Then read the directions for Part B and write your essay.

For Part B, use your answers from Part A, information from the documents, and your knowledge of social studies to write a well-organized essay. In the essay you will be asked to:

• Name three gifts the Nile River gave to the Ancient Egyptians.
• Describe how each of these gifts improved life in Ancient Egypt.
PART A

The documents that follow relate information about Egypt. Examine each document carefully and then answer the question(s) that follow it. These answers will help you in Part B.

Document 1

LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Egypt is located in the northeastern corner of Africa. Topographically, the country can be divided into four regions.

1. Wagh al-Bahari or lower Egypt, which is the broad alluvial Nile Delta.
2. The Western Desert which is an arid region covered by vast rolling plains of sand, shifting dunes and large depressions.
3. The Eastern Desert or Arabian Desert, which is an elevated plateau broken by deep valleys.
4. The Sinai Peninsula that is separated from the bulk of Egypt by the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. The Sinai is a desert region with mountains rising in the south.

The Nile River is not only the lifeline of Egypt, it is also the longest river in Africa. The country’s largest lake is the manmade Lake Nasser and others include Menzaleh, Brullo, Idu and Mariut. Major Cities (pop. est.); Cairo 6,849,000, Alexandria 3,382,000 (1994). Land Use; agricultural-cultivated 3%, urban, wasteland and other 97% (1993).

1. What is the lifeline of Egypt? ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________ [1]

2. What percentage of Egypt’s land is cultivated for farming? __________________

________________________________________________________________________ [1]

3. Where does most of the population in Egypt live and why? __________________

________________________________________________________________________ [2]
Irrigation existed in Egypt around the time of the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt. Irrigation allowed the waters of the Nile River to be directed farther inland by way of irrigation ditches, or channels dug into the ground. This meant that more as well as better crops could be grown.

http://www.horus.ics.org.eg/html/the_nile_river.html

Agriculture in Egypt is almost totally dependent on the Nile. The fertile strip of the Nile offers the only possible resource. The people congregated on the steep banks of the river despite its annual floods and shifting marshlands. The dependency on the Nile is not only for the irrigation necessary to raise crops, but also for the topsoil deposited annually by the floods. Every year from July to October the Nile River valley is gradually flooded. Its annual cycle of flooding and the depositing of silt create a new layer of topsoil each year. This topsoil is rich in organic nutrients and nitrogen. By October the waters begin to recede, leaving behind pools of water in depressed areas of the floodplain. After the water subsides enough to let the remaining water be absorbed by the soil, the Egyptians would plant their crops in the mud.

http://carbon.cudenver.edu/stc-link/AE/technical.html

1. What farming technique is the picture showing? ____________________________
                                                                                   _______________________________________ [1]

2. Why did farmers in Ancient Egypt use this technique? ____________________________
                                                                                   _______________________________________ [2]

3. Why did the flooding of the Nile River benefit the farmers? ____________________________
                                                                                   _______________________________________ [2]
Excerpt from “Hymn to the Nile”
c. 2100 B.C.

Hail to you, O Nile!
Who shows itself over this land,
and comes
To give life to Egypt!
Mysterious is your pouring forth
from darkness,
On this day that we celebrate!

Water the orchards created by Ra,
to cause all the cattle to live,
You give the earth [water] to
drink, eternal one!
Path that descends from the sky...
you cause the workshops...
to prosper!

1. What is one gift the Egyptians thanked the Nile for? __________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________ [1]

2. Based on the land surrounding the Nile River, describe why the Ancient Egyptians
claim that the Nile gives “life” to Egypt. ________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________ [2]
Although most stone was quarried at Giza, some had to be transported to the site along the Nile. Yellowish limestone was used for the core of the pyramids, while the internal burial chamber was lined with massive granite blocks. Originally, the pyramids were encased in lighter limestone but this was plundered over the years to provide building materials for Cairo.

http://www.culturefocus.com/egypt.htm

1. Where did the Ancient Egyptians get most of the stone for the pyramids? __________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________ [1]

2. How did the Nile help in building the pyramids? ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________ [2]
“The sun and the river, which together formed the dominating cause of existence, made a profound impression on the people. They were two natural forces with both creative and destructive power. For the life-giving rays of the sun that caused the crop to grow could also cause it to shrivel and die. And the river that invigorated the soil with its life-giving silt could destroy whatever lay in its path or, if it failed to rise enough, bring drought. The sun and the river, moreover, shared in the pattern of death and rebirth: the sun ‘died’ when it sank on the western horizon only to be ‘reborn’ in the eastern sky the following morning. And the ‘death’ of the land followed by the germination or ‘rebirth’ of the crops each year were directly connected with the river’s annual flood. Rebirth was, therefore a central feature of the Egyptian scene. It was seen as a natural sequence to death and undoubtably lay at the root of the ancient Egyptian conviction of life after death. Like the sun and the crops, man, they felt assured, would rise again to live a second life.”

http://carbon.cudenver.edu/stc-link/AE/culture.html#RELIGION
Ancient Egypt - Culture

1. Why did the sun and river together make a profound impression on Ancient Egyptians?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

[1]

2. What ancient Egyptian belief did the sun and river lay at the root of? _________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

[1]

3. Why was the sun and river probably the reason Ancient Egyptians had this belief?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

[2]
These women are watering their livestock and doing the laundry. The Nile is still the most important thing in their lives, it is their source of life giving water and today it is also their washing machine. Behind them are the crops that their village relies on, in these fields is where you will find the men of the village hard at work. The mud brick home is similar to those built by their ancestors. Behind the tree line you can see the cliffs that mark the edge of the western desert, this was Egypt's best defense against invaders from the west. This thin strip of land that you see between the river and the cliffs is typical of the amount of land that the Egyptians had to live on.

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1. What are the women doing in the picture? ________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________ [1]

2. Name two ways life in Egypt today is similar to life in Ancient Egypt. __________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________ [2]
The Nile River
The Nile River was the source of life itself in Ancient Egypt. It is the longest river in the world covering a length of 4,145 miles.

The Nile provided food for Egyptians. Geese and Pin-tail ducks were a favorite food for wealthy Egyptians. The Nile was plentiful with fish, which were considered unclean to wealthy Egyptians, so they never ate fish. Poor Egyptians sometimes had no choice and had to eat fish. Because of the Nile these things were available. Near oases date palms, grapevines, and fig trees grew. An oasis is a fertile area in a desert where plants are able to grow. Underground water comes close enough to the surface for springs and wells to exist.

Egyptians also used the Nile River for transportation. Egyptians traveled by boat along the Nile. The Ancient Egyptians used the boats to carry goods like food and clothing to their homes. When building a pyramid, the boats would carry limestone to where the pyramid was being built. When the pharaoh died and his body was ready, the funeral barge carried the pharaoh's sarcophagus and his belongings to the pyramid.

The Egyptians used their gifts wisely. Here the fertile river banks contrasted the barren deserts, floods, droughts, black land, and red land. They managed to build an organized civilization.

http://www.museum.state.il.us/mic_home/schools98/puffer/project/Water.html

1. Using the above document, name two gifts of the Nile. __________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________ [1]

2. Explain one way Egyptians use the gifts of the Nile wisely. ______________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________ [2]
Egypt DBQ Essay

Using the information from the documents and your knowledge of the ancient Egyptians, write an essay in which you:

- Describe three gifts the Nile River gave to the ancient Egyptians
- Describe how each of these gifts improved life in ancient Egypt

Your essay must do the following:

- Use at least three documents to support your thesis
- Use a logical plan of organization (see below)
- Use excellent word choice
- Use varied sentence structure, including all of your sentence patterns at least once
- Use proper grammar and spelling

Organization:

1. Introduction
   - Include general information about ancient Egypt and the Nile River
   - End with a thesis statement

2. Gift #1
   - Topic sentence
   - Details about the gift from the documents
   - How the gift improved life

3. Gift #2
   - Topic sentence
   - Details about the gift from the documents
   - How the gift improved life

4. Gift #3
   - Topic sentence
   - Details about the gift from the documents
   - How the gift improved life

5. Conclusion
   - Restate your thesis in different words
   - End with a concluding thought
Egypt DBQ Organizer

Thesis:

Gifts the Nile gave to the Egyptians

How did this improve life for ancient Egyptians?