

RIVERS

Overview

-A river is a path that water takes as it flows downhill, normally towards another river, a lake, sea or ocean.

-Rivers come in many different shapes and sizes, and often join together to make larger rivers.

-As rivers a ready source of water, lots of plants/ animals often live near or in them.

-Most inland human settlements were originally formed around rivers. In addition to drinking and bathing, rivers were also important waterways for trade.

-Rivers can flood, at which point they can become exceptionally dangerous.



Notable Rivers

Nile		-The Nile is generally considered the longest river in the world. It runs through north-eastern Africa. It contains a vast array of wildlife, e.g Nile crocodiles and hippos.
Amazon		-Through some tributaries, the Amazon is the longest river in the world. The river holds more water than any other river – it is responsible for one fifth of all of the freshwater that reaches the world's oceans! The river supports the vast Amazon Rainforest.
Yangtze		-The Yangtze River is the longest river in Asia. It is fed by glaciers in the Tanggula mountain range of China. The river runs through China and empties into the East China Sea. The Three Gorges Dam is sited on the river.
Thames		-The Thames is one of the longest rivers in the UK, but is short (346km) compared to the world's largest rivers. It flows through London and has an estuary which feeds into the North Sea. It has frozen in winter in the past.
Mississippi		-The Mississippi River is one of the most famous rivers in North America, and runs through several major cities. The Mississippi joins with the Missouri River to form the largest river system in North America.

Key Vocabulary

- River
- Waterway
- Source
- Tributary
- Watershed
- Floodplain
- Channel
- Riverbank
- Estuary
- Confluence
- Flow
- Mouth
- Silt
- Nile
- Amazon

Diagram and Terminology

Source – This is the beginning of a river, sometimes known as its headwaters. Some come from underground springs, whilst others are formed by mountain rainfall/ snow.

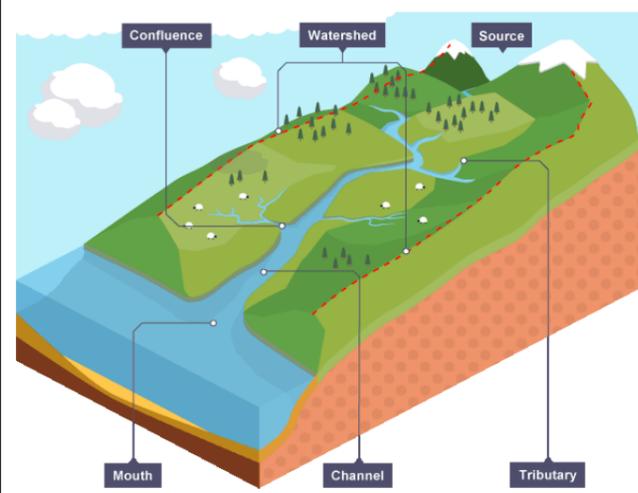
Tributary – A river or stream that feeds into another river, rather than ending in a lake, a sea, or an ocean.

Watershed – The area of land that drains into a specific river.

Floodplain – An (often low-lying) area of land which becomes covered in water when a river overflows.

Channel – The path a river takes is called its channel. A rivers course depends on the amount of water it holds, how long it has been flowing, and the types of rock that it flows over.

Riverbank – The land immediately along the river. This land is often fertile.



Confluence – The junction of two rivers.

Flow – The name given for the amount of water that a river holds. This can change through the year, e.g. in rainy seasons.

Mouth – The endpoint of a river, at which it reaches a lake, sea or ocean.

Important Facts

-Water always flows downhill. This is important for understanding how rivers form, and how they contribute to the water cycle.

-Rivers are fresh water – oceans are salt water.

-When rivers are flowing quickly, they take bits of earth off banks downstream. This is called erosion.

-When there has been too much rainfall, rivers may overflow or 'burst their banks.' This can cause significant flooding.

-Most of the water that we drink is taken from rivers. It is cleaned before it is suitable to drink.

-Silt is material carried by running water, for example earth or minerals.

-Sometimes, rivers carry so much silt that they form new land, called a Delta.

