

## THE NILE

*Without the Nile, Egypt is nothing. Apart from the scattered oases in the Western Desert and the coastal areas along the Mediterranean and the Red seas, the Nile Valley is the only habitable area of the country, and for centuries the river has provided Egypt's entire water supply, its chief means of internal communication, its only source of power, and the basic factor in its complex and vital pattern of agricultural development.*

*Until the nineteenth century this pattern had remained virtually unchanged since the days of the Pharaohs. The flood waters of the Nile, which reach Egypt in summer after the rainy season far to the south in the highlands of Ethiopia, were diverted by irrigation canals on to as much as possible of the land lying on either side of the river; when the water subsided, the peasants gathered their single crop for the year, and lived on it until the yearly miracle was repeated. Occasionally Nature failed them and they went hungry; sometimes the flood was excessive and washed away their villages and drowned their animals. Either way, the Egyptians accepted with resignation an apparently unchangeable and on the whole beneficent natural cycle.*

*The great dam at Asswan, completed as the twentieth century began, culminated attempts to control the Nile. The Egyptians now had some freedom from the river's dictation. It was possible for two or even three plantings to be grown on the same land -incidentally increasing land values considerably.*

## QUESTIONS

1. Which parts of Egypt are populated?
2. How do Egyptians travel mainly?
3. What type of energy do they use?
4. What sometimes went wrong in the Egyptian agricultural system?
5. Explain in your own words why the Nile is important. (60 words).
6. Take out from the text all the sentences with the verb in the passive and say what tense is the verb. After that put one of the sentences into the active.
7. Vocabulary:  
Supply:  
Highlands:  
Divert:  
Gather:  
Crop: