

Rivers

How Are Rivers Made?

Rivers are large, natural streams which flow to the sea or to a lake. Rivers begin life at the **source**, which could be a natural spring, melted ice and snow, or rainwater running down the land. Most rivers start as a tiny stream, high up a mountain. Smaller streams merge into one larger **channel** and **erode** the land until a river is formed. Most rivers end up in the sea at the **mouth** of the river.

The World's Greatest Rivers

Some rivers around the world are famous for being long, wide or fast-flowing. The Nile river in Africa is the longest river in the world. It is 6,650km long. The Nile river **basin** covers eleven countries and flows into the Mediterranean Sea.

The Amazon river in South America is the world's widest river. At its widest point, the river is about 11km wide. This river feeds the famous Amazon rainforest and is also the fastest-flowing river in the world.



The Nile river has so many people living alongside it that the lights of the houses and streets can be seen from space.

River Life

Rivers are essential for life as we know it. They carry water and important nutrients all around the earth and provide habitats for millions of species of plants and animals.

Humans use rivers for many different things, such as:

- Drinking water
- Transport
- Washing
- Trading
- Cleaning clothes
- Leisure
- Fishing



Millions of people around the world rely on rivers to make their living.

"Fishing boats on Lymington River" by Ian Capper is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Water Pollution

Just like oceans and the air, rivers can become **polluted** in various ways. River pollution is damaging to humans and to the environment because it **contaminates** the fresh water.

Types of river pollution include:

- Rubbish and solids (plastic, metal and other objects)
- Sediment (sand, grit etc.)
- Chemicals (factory waste, fertilisers, oils)
- Bacteria from animal and human waste

The best way to prevent river pollution is to stop the **pollutants** before they reach the river. Some helpful ways to protect your local river are:

- Keep oil and grease out of the sink. Instead, collect it in a jar and then throw it away with solid waste.
- Don't flush anything down the toilet except for toilet paper. Anything else might end up in oceans, lakes or rivers.
- Always save water. Turn off taps when you are not using them as this means that less water has to be cleaned again for use.



Glossary

basin	a rounded bowl in a landscape where water, such as a river, may collect
channel	a path through the landscape formed by the movement of water
contaminate	to make something impure or dirty by adding a new poisonous or damaging substance
erode	to gradually wear away the land
mouth	where a river empties into the sea or a lake
pollutants	substances which make water impure or unclean
polluted	made impure or unclean by adding poisonous or damaging substances
source	the beginning of a river, usually on high ground

Questions

1. What is the Nile river famous for?

2. Why can the Nile be seen from space?

3. Complete the sentences with the correct words from the text.

Rivers are _____ for life as we know it. They carry _____ and important _____ all around the world and provide _____ for millions of _____ of plants and animals.

4. Name three ways in which humans use rivers.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5. Find and copy a caption from the text.

6. a) What is the meaning of the word 'contaminate'?

b) Why has the author put some words in **bold**?

7. The subtitle 'Water Pollution' tells the reader what the next section of text is about. Can you think of another subtitle which could have been used?

8. Why do you think the author suggests avoiding putting oil and grease down the sink?

Answers

1. What is the Nile river famous for?

The Nile river is the longest river (6,650km) in the world.

2. Why can the Nile be seen from space?

Accept answers referring to the fact that there are many people living along the Nile's banks and the lights shine brightly at night.

3. Complete the sentences with the correct words from the text.

Rivers are **essential** for life as we know it. They carry **water** and important **nutrients** all around the world and provide **habitats** for millions of **species** of plants and animals.

4. Name three ways in which humans use rivers.

Accept any three of the following:

- Drinking water
- Cleaning clothes
- Transport
- Leisure
- Washing
- Fishing
- Trading

5. Find and copy a caption from the text.

Accept any of the following:

- 'The Amazon river feeds the incredible Amazon tropical rainforest.'
- 'The lights of the houses and streets along the Nile can be seen from space!'
- 'Fishing boats on the Lymington river on the south coast of England.'

6. a) What is the meaning of the word 'contaminate'?

Accept answers which suggest that children have found the word in the glossary, e.g. 'To contaminate is to make something impure or dirty by adding a new poisonous or damaging substance.'

- b) Why has the author put some words in **bold**?

Accept answers that refer to the fact that the words in bold are defined in the glossary. Also accept an acknowledgement that these are words that the reader may be unfamiliar with.

7. The subtitle 'Water Pollution' tells the reader what the next section of text is about. Can you think of another subtitle which could have been used?

Accept any subtitle which is short, catchy and gives the reader a sufficient summary of the section about polluted rivers.

8. Why do you think the author suggests avoiding putting oil and grease down the sink?

Accept answers which refer to the fact that sinks may drain into local rivers and that oil is on the list of chemicals which pollute water.