ZOOS AND GARDENS WORKBOOK
Life Along the River

Great civilizations like ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Sumer were built along major rivers. Rivers provided plants and animals for food, water for irrigating crops, and transportation. The Nile River, one of the most famous rivers in the world, played an important role in ancient Egypt's success as an empire and is still a major resource for the country of Egypt today. Around the world, rivers of all sizes can play an important part in local life.

Do you live close to any rivers? How do they impact your community? Choose a river near your home to investigate. You can either visit the river in person or research online. How does your river compare to the Nile?

Important plants and animals live along the Nile River. Ancient Egyptians used papyrus plants to make paper-like papyri sheets to write on. They also fished in the river for catfish and tigerfish. Hippopotami, crocodiles, ibises, falcons, geese, and other birds were also important, whether for food or religious purposes.

What plants and animals live along your river?

Ancient Egyptians and Nubians were connected by the Nile River, which allowed the people of these two civilizations to travel between cities and trade. Today, the Nile River is also an important resource for tourism.

Do people use your river for travel, trade, or tourism? Have you ever taken a boat trip on your river?
Ancient Egyptians also used the Nile for bathing, drinking, and recreation. Nearly all ancient Egyptian cities lined the river, and even today, ninety-five percent of Egyptians live within a couple miles of the river.

What do people use your river for? Do many people live nearby?

The Nile River has been a source of water for farming for thousands of years, allowing ancient Egyptians to grow crops like beans, cotton, wheat, and flax. Almost all of the plant life along the Nile River in Egypt today is because of irrigation, as the region is a desert. Silt deposits in the Nile Delta (the green triangle near the top of the image) and from annual flooding along the riverbanks make the land perfect for farming.

Are there any farms along your river? Does your river ever flood? What does your river look like in a satellite image?
Create an Ancient-Inspired Kitchen Garden

Everyday ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians kept small gardens outside of their homes to grow herbs and vegetables to eat. Many of the things they grew, like onions, celery, lettuce, mint, cilantro, and garlic are things we still cook with today. These foods can also easily be grown in a kitchen garden! Follow these steps to create an ancient-inspired garden using scraps from your kitchen.

You will need:
• Vegetable or herb scraps (see instructions)
• Cups or jars
• Water
• An out-of-the-way spot that gets sunshine
• Toothpicks (for garlic)
• Pots and soil or a garden bed (for some plants)

Regrow scallions, onions, and garlic sprouts!

For scallions and onions, keep the root end of the vegetable with roots still attached and place in a cup with water. Use just enough water to cover the roots, and check the water every day. Your scallions or onions will start sprouting new growth in a few days!

To grow garlic sprouts, use a few toothpicks poked into a clove of garlic to hold the garlic in place so that just the root end is in the water. Within a few days, green garlic sprouts will appear, which can be snipped off and eaten in anything that garlic would taste good in!

Regrow celery leaves and lettuce!

Cut off the bottom of your celery or lettuce, leaving the bottom root end intact. Put into a shallow dish of water. For celery, keep the plant in a warm, sunny spot, and you should get celery leaves sprouting in a few days.

Regrow herbs like cilantro and mint!

Place a stem with leaves into a cup of water, making sure to keep the leaves out of the water. Wait for roots to grow. When they are doing well, the plants can be transplanted into soil. You can do the same thing with leaves of lettuce—just be sure to mist the lettuce leaves every few days. When roots regrow, the leaves can be transferred to soil.
Make your own plant painting!

Art in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia would often contain images of plants and animals. Drawings or carvings of plants like date palms, papyrus, and lotus flowers were used to decorate everything from temple walls to everyday objects. Read the instructions below on how to use plants to make your very own art!

**Materials:**
- 3 heavy textbooks
- 1 roll of parchment paper
- Assorted flowers and leaves
- Craft glue
- A piece of paper
- 1 paintbrush
- 1 pencil

**Instructions:**

1. First you want to collect flowers and leaves to press. Do your parents have any house plants that you could pick leaves from? Does your family have a garden you can pick flowers from? Is there a park or woods nearby that your could gather plants from? Try and collect around 15–25 assorted flowers and leaves.
2. Now make a list of what plants you picked. It may be helpful to search online to try and identify what plants you have or to use a plant guidebook. Are any of your plants similar to ones they may have had in Egypt or Mesopotamia?
3. To press the flowers, take one of your textbooks and place a sheet of parchment paper over the cover. Arrange your leaves and flowers so that they all fit onto the parchment paper. Take another sheet of parchment paper and gently lay it over the arranged flowers.
4. Place the other two textbooks on top of your parchment paper and flowers. You want to sandwich the plants between heavy objects so that they are pressed down and can dry. Anything heavy will do!

Instructions continue on the next page!
Instructions cont.
5. Leave your plants in a cool, dry place and wait seven to ten days. After that time check the flowers. Are they papery and thin? If the plants still look like there is moisture left in them, place the textbooks back as they were and leave them for a few more days.
6. Once you finish drying the flowers, you can start to make your picture. Take a pencil and a piece of paper and start to plan out where you want your different leaves and flowers to go. You can make an animal, like the owl on the first page, or just a fun pattern!
7. Once you know what you want to make, you can begin gluing your different pressed flowers to the paper. Take your paintbrush and coat the back of your leaf or flower with a thin layer of glue. Then press it down onto your paper and keep adding more until your masterpiece is complete!

Archeologists will often collect plants from their dig sites to compare to plants they may find from the past. These wheat stalks are from a dig in modern-day Turkey.

This clay tablet is from the ancient city of Persepolis in what is now modern-day Iran. Can you spot the palm tree in the center?

Sometimes archeologists will discover plants that ancient people may have eaten or grown. This wheat from ancient Egypt is over a thousand years old!