Choke Point: Suez Canal

A **choke** point is a narrow channel or canal that connects two larger bodies of water. Choke Points are valuable trading routes that save vessels from traveling thousands of miles to reach a destination. Historically, countries have used choke points to create a trade monopoly by restricting trade through the narrow passage.

The Suez Canal is in **Northern Egpyt** and connects the *Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea*. The canal is 101 miles long but is only 179 feet wide at its narrowest point. The canal was constructed as a shorter route between Europe and Asia. Today, the Suez Canal's importance has increased due to the rise of oil trade in the region. It now serves as a major passage for ships carrying oil and petroleum products from North Africa and Southwest Asia to Europe, North America, and the rest of the world.

Egypt controls the Suez Canal. Thus, the *internal political stability of Egypt* affects the world's energy security. Conflict in Egypt could jeopardize the security of the canal's safety. This could force vessels to use alternate routes to ensure cargo reaches locations. Increased shipping times and costs would have a direct impact on oil and petroleum prices worldwide.

Egypt's Aswan High Dam

Benefit Drawbacks

Egypt's Aswan High Dam, located near the Egypt-Sudan Border, brings both benefits and drawbacks for the human geography of the area.

Irrigation For Farming

The dam helps provide irrigation to thousands of new acres of farmland.

Flooding and Farms

When the Nile River flooded, it deposited fertile silt on agricultural lands. The Aswan High Dam, by preventing flooding, has resulted in a decrease in agricultural productivity.

Powering Communities

The dam provides hydroelectric power to Egypt, about 10 billion kilowatt-hours. This is enough to power nearly 870,000 average U.S. homes

In 1970 Egypt completed the Aswan High Dam, located about 600 miles south of Cairo, Egypt. The dam controls the Nile's floods. It also created Lake Nassar and provides irrigation for about 3 million acres of land while also increasing the Egyptian fishing industry. Electricity for Egypt is generated by the dam. The completion of the dam marked the first time in history that the Nile's annual flood could be controlled by humans. One conflict the dam has created is between Sudan and Egypt, as Egypt is regulating water flow, electricity production, and consumes more of the water than Sudan.

Population Relocation

About 90,000 Egyptians and Sudanese had to be relocated because of the dam.

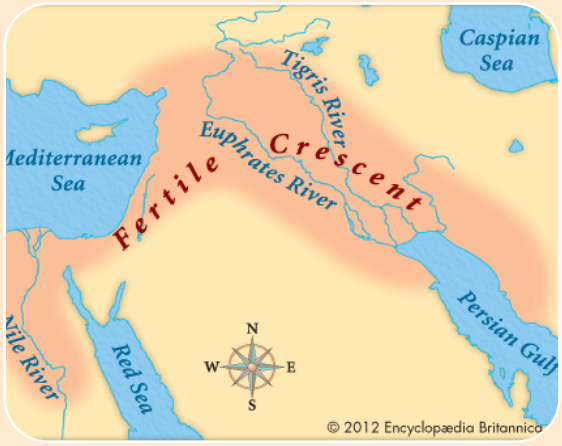
Flood Control and Safety

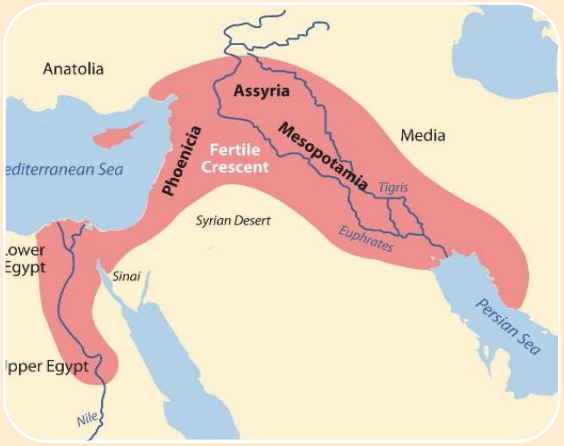
The Aswan High Dam controls flooding along the Nile River. Before construction of the dam, flooding could be unpredictable and dangerous. The dam makes it safer to live along the Nile.

Threat to Culture

The flooding caused by building the dam would have submerged the ancient temple of Abu Simbel. The temple was dismantled by hand and moved to higher ground.

Fertile Crescent- Mesopotamia





Mesopotamia, or "The Land Between Two Rivers", was part of a larger region called the Fertile Crescent. The Sumerians, the world's first civilization, settled and farmed the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Within these two rivers, was the first permanent settlements and the start of civilizations. The broader areas of the Fertile Crescent are the root of much of the worlds culture, government, and human systems.

Although **Mesopotamia** had fertile soil, farming was not easy. The flooding of the rivers destroyed crops annually, and in the dry season plants wasted away due to long droughts. The farmers eventually developed methods that helped them store or reroute water to increase the amount of food they could grow all year long. In time, other societies and civilizations developed along the Tigris and Euphrates, becoming the first areas with permanent civilizations lasting to present day.

Although climates were not always ideal for living, the Fertile Cresent stretched from between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, to the Mediterranean Sea, and as far to the Sinai Peninsula, connection Asia to Africa. The Fertile Crescent holds importance for here were the first permanent civilizations and cultures created. Also, throughout much of the Middle East, dry hot climates are found, but the Fertile Crescent provides an oasis for farming and agriculture that is still important today for the people of this region.

Nile River Valley

Ancient Civilization — Where the Nile Flows

- Egypt is probably the best known of all the ancient River Valley civilizations. The Egypt of ancient times probably looked very much like the Egypt of today. Egypt is a large country but most of it is a sandy desert. Here and there is an oasis- a place in the desert where there is irrigation or an underground spring. But in this vast country, crops can be grown only in one long, narrow strip of land; the valley of the Nile river. The Nile flows from the mountains of East and Central Africa to the Mediterranean Sea.

Agricultural Society — Could Egypt Thrive Without the Nile?

- Each year the valley received a fresh layer of soil (before the Aswan High Dam was built). Because of this, the land of the Nile Valley has been farmed continuously for more than 6,000 years. The Nile Valley has other natural resources besides the amazingly fertile soil. For example, it has a sunny climate that is free of frost all year and well suited to farming.
  The Nile Valley also has deposits of clay, granite, sandstone, and limestone. These minerals are used for building. The ancient Egyptians needed these materials, for there were few forests to furnish lumber.

Flourishing Civilization — Natural Barriers for the Egyptians

- Moreover, the Egyptians were able to build a great civilization along the Nile River because of the valleys location. Deserts and seas surround the Nile valley. These deserts and seas provided a natural barrier that defended Egypt from invasion for thousands of years. Because their land was well protected, the Egyptians did not need large armies. Instead, they used their wealth, their resources, and their skills to build a great civilization that lasted more than 3000 years.