



# River Valley People: A Jigsaw Activity

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**Historical Context:** Early peoples settled near reliable sources of water for transportation, food, and protection. As agricultural techniques improved through use of irrigation, settlements grew into permanent towns and villages. The people of these towns began to specialize their jobs, and became reliant upon each other for survival. No longer were nomadic peoples looking out for themselves, but now a village developed with interdependence and social structure.

**Time:** One class period (40 minutes)

**Correlation to Standards:** World History, Geography, Economics

**Materials Needed:** Printed sheets for each activity station. Copy of student response sheet for each student. Pre-cut “specialized jobs” sheets.\*

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

Understand the jobs and roles of various parts of Nile River Valley peoples.

Draw conclusions from the lessons about how people lived in the Nile River Valley.

Understand the importance of seasonal flooding on the Nile.

**Task:** Classroom will be broken into five stations.

One for each:

1. Farming/ Agriculture

2. The River

3. Clothing

4. Housing

5. **Specialized Jobs:** The sheet for this needs to be cut apart to create a matching game.



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Class will be divided into even number of groups for each station. Distribute question sheets to each student. Allow students to have 4-5 min. at each station before rotating to the next one (eventually going to all five). At each station they will complete the task, keeping their own record sheet. After completing the five stations students will work together using their responses to the questions to create an interdependence web showing how the River Valley community was tied together. Each group will submit one web. The center of the interdependence web should be the Nile River, surrounding it should be examples from each work station, helping to demonstrate the importance of the river.

**Assessment:** Accuracy of their answers on the student response sheet and the interdependence web.

**Extension:** Create a travel brochure, using the information gathered in the groups to advertise “The Nile River Valley.”

**\*Suggestion:** laminate all station materials



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## Station #1: Farming/ Agriculture



Nebamun hunting in the marshes, fragment of a scene from the tomb-chapel of Nebamun. Thebes, Egypt, Late 18th Dynasty, around 1350 BC, The British Museum, ©The Trustees of the British Museum

Nebamun's cattle, fragment of a scene from the tomb-chapel of Nebamun, Thebes, Egypt Late 18th Dynasty, around 1350 BC, The British Museum, ©The Trustees of the British Museum

Major crops grown in Nile River Valley: Wheat, Barley, Flax.

**Major animals raised:** Cattle, Pigs, Goats, Sheep, Poultry (Ducks/Geese)

Wheat is the major grain crop grown; used to grind into flour for food (bread)

A farmer along the Nile River in Africa relied on the river to provide water and nutrients for his fields. There were three major seasons in the year; flood, growing, and harvest. When the river flooded, fields were under water, and the farmer spent time preparing his tools, fishing, and tending his herds of cattle or goats. Tools were made of wood, including plows, shovels, hoes, and harvesting sickles. When the water receded, it was time to plant; using either an ox-pulled wooden plow, or hand tools. Wheat seed was planted in the fields. Often the livestock were run across the fields to help cover the seed. The fields needed to be watered, so canals were dug to bring the river water into the fields. Birds and other animals try to eat your crops as they grew, so you must keep an eye out! Once it was harvest time, the wheat was cut down, bundled, and brought home.



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## Station #1: Continued

Now, to separate the grain from the plant, you had to beat the ears with tools, or let your animals walk across it. The grain had to be swept up to winnow it (separate the grain from the junk) by tossing it into the air and letting the junk blow away. The grain was then carefully collected and placed in a safe container, where no water or animals could spoil it. By the time this was done it would be almost time to begin next season's planting again!



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## Station #2: The River

The Nile River is more than 4,000 miles long!

The Nile flows from south to north, from the mountains of central Africa to the Mediterranean Sea.

Snow melt and rainfall in the mountains thousands of miles away caused huge seasonal flooding in the Egyptian Nile River Valley. Today there are dams to control water levels and the river valley no longer floods.

Ancient Egyptians relied on this flooding to bring fresh soil and water into their farm fields.

Ancient Egyptians believed that gods and goddesses controlled the river and the seasons. They were worshipped to ensure water would return each year and allow them to farm.

The river provided the easiest means of transportation for goods up and down the river.

Today, as in ancient times the river is home to many useful animals, such as fish and water birds for food. Many other animals come to the river for water, so they can be hunted. The river is also home to some of Africa's deadliest animals: crocodiles and hippopotamuses.



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## Station #3: Clothing

Look at the label on your clothing (or your neighbor's). Where was it made? What is it made out of? If you lived in ancient Egypt the answer would be pretty simple: It was made at home, made out of linen.

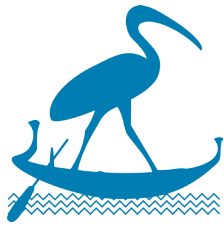
Making cloth at home was a job for women, using a commonly grown plant called flax. The stems were soaked in water to soften them, then beaten into fibers. These fibers were spun into thread using a hand spindle. The thread could then be woven into fabric on a loom. Making clothing was a time-consuming and difficult process, so clothes were kept as long as possible. Basic clothing was the same for everyone: white, loosely draped, and wrapped around the body. Often, workers would work in only a loincloth to keep their clothing in better condition.

Linen is a very breathable fabric, and white reflects the sun; two important factors in dressing for the desert. Wealth and status were shown with jewelry and cleanliness of clothing. The more sheer (thin) the material, the more expensive it was. This was because thinner, more delicate fabric was more difficult to produce.

Since everyone wore the same basic clothing, jewelry and accessories were very important to ancient Egyptian style and dress.



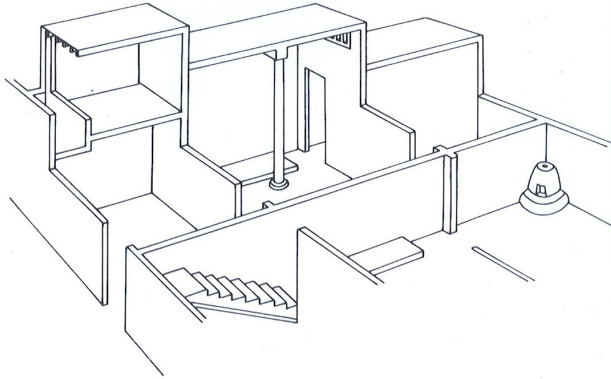
Spindle Whorl with Flax  
Wood  
Meydum, Egypt  
The University of Pennsylvania Museum  
of Archaeology and Anthropology,  
31-27-36



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## Station #4: Housing



All ancient Egyptian houses were built of unbaked mud bricks with wood used only for doors, windows and roof beams. The houses in the temple were constructed as row-houses, one next to the other with a small living area, kitchen storage spaces and a second story or the roof was often used for sleeping.

The building most associated with Egypt is the pyramid, but this was a tomb, not a home. People lived in simple houses constructed from easily found materials. Next to a river, that material is mud. Mud bricks are made by mixing river mud with straw and forming blocks. These are then laid out in the sun to harden like rocks. They are stacked into walls, with timber (wood) to support a roof. The roof was made of bundles of reeds tied together then covered with mud. The walls were covered with plaster to make it clean and protect the bricks. The plaster walls could be painted different colors inside, but the outside was kept light grey. The floors were dirt. The mud brick was easy to build, and it offered protection from the beating sun and sand outside. Since windows would let in both sun and sand, few windows were found in these homes.

Most people had one room to live in. In towns, the buildings might be 2-3 stories high (like an apartment building) as people wanted to live as close as possible to the river, not spread out into the desert. If you were wealthy, you might have a mansion with many rooms for you and your servants.

Open gardens and markets lined the streets between and around the houses in a town.



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## Station #5: Specialized Jobs

In a village, people had specific jobs. They had to work together and rely on each other for survival. Match each job to the person who performed that task. Discuss why these jobs would have been important as you go through them.

Basket maker	Built and fixed mud brick houses
Carpenter	Made sandals from woven reeds
Doctor	Wrote and kept records for officials, either on papyrus or carved in stone
Mason	Traded goods, food, tools, clothing, often traveling up and down the Nile
Merchants	Built material for tools, coffins, boats, and furniture from wood
Metal smiths	Practiced religious rituals, advising leaders
Priests	Created clay jars for storage of goods
Potter	Melted and molded gold, silver, and bronze for tools and jewelry
Sandal Maker	Wove baskets from reeds to store goods
Scribe	Protected the town and kingdom from invaders or animals
Soldiers	Healed physical wounds, treated sickness
Stone mason	Carved stone for buildings and statues





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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** At each station you will find documents relating to Nile River Valley life. Use that information to answer the following questions:

## Station 1

1. What was the main crop grown in the Nile River Valley?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What does the picture tell about the way work was done?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What were tools made out of?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How many seasons made up the farmer's year?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is winnowing?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Station 2

1. What direction does the Nile flow?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How long is the Nile River?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why does the river flood every year?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What benefit did this flooding have?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What two deadly animals live in the river?

\_\_\_\_\_



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## Station 3

1. What material was clothing made from?

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2. Where does this fiber come from?

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3. What color did everyone wear?

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4. Why was this color and style popular?

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5. Where did people get their clothing?

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## Station 4

1. What was the main building material?

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2. What was the roof made from?

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3. Why were these material chosen?

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4. Why not build wooden houses?

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5. How big was the average home?

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