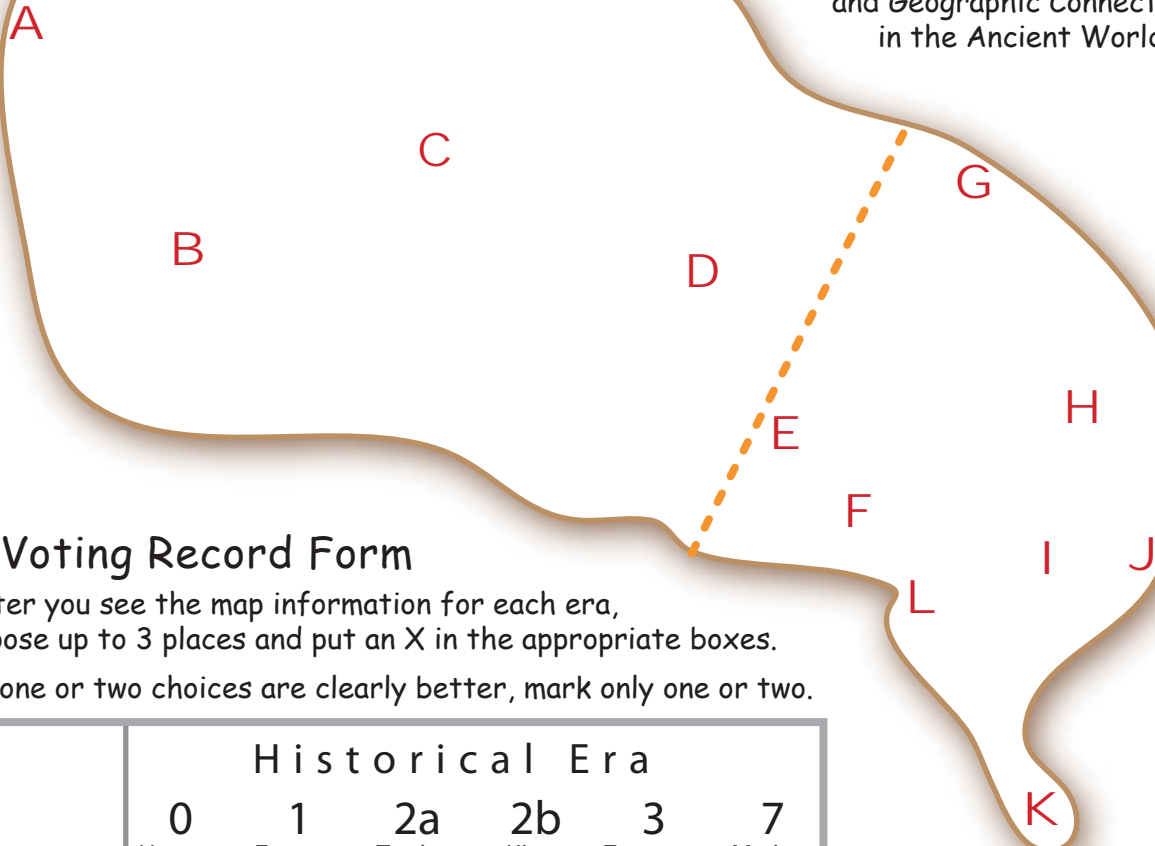


Choosing a "Home Base"

Looking at the Influence of Geographic Conditions and Geographic Connections in the Ancient World



Voting Record Form

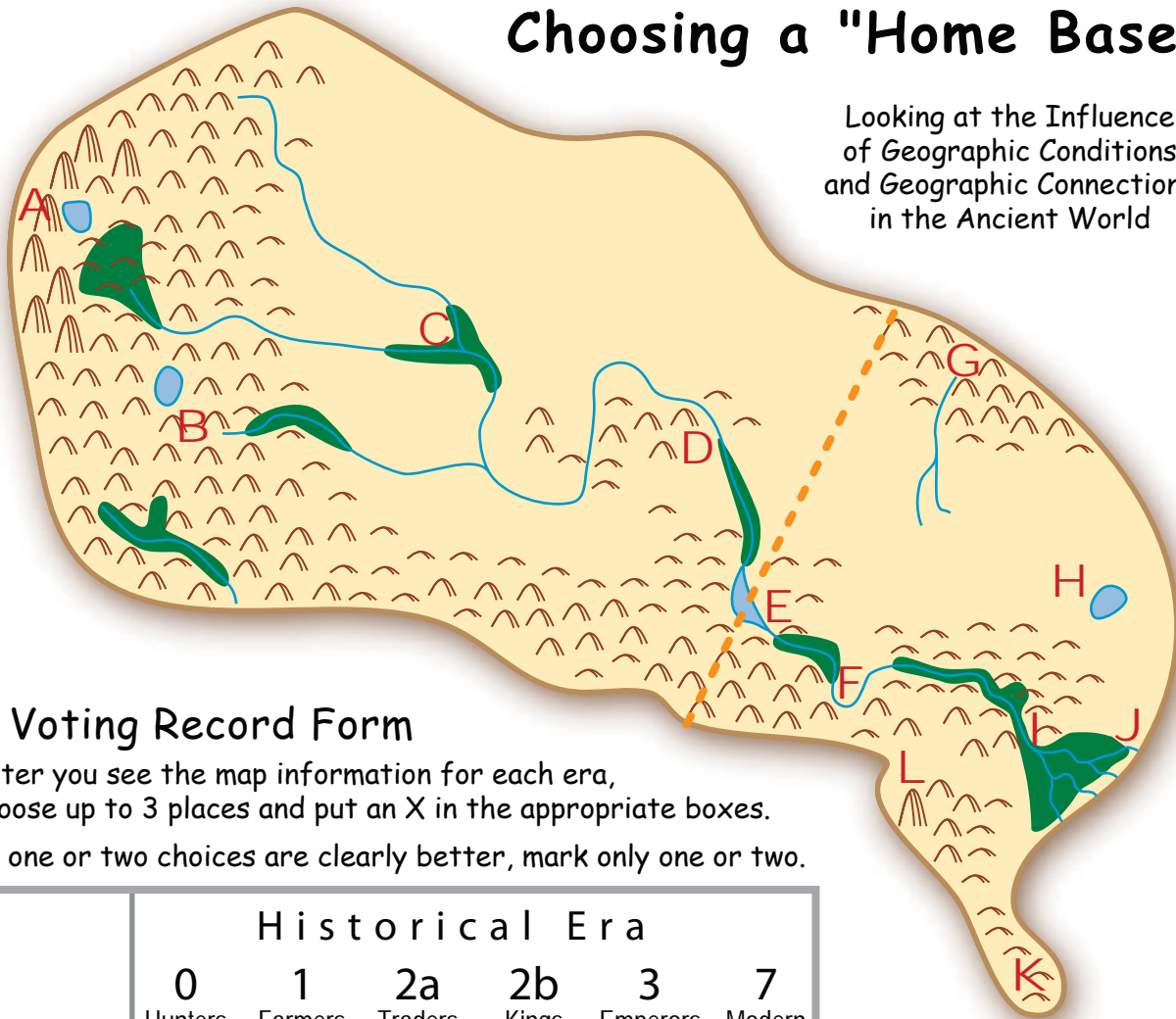
After you see the map information for each era, choose up to 3 places and put an X in the appropriate boxes.

If one or two choices are clearly better, mark only one or two.

	Historical Era					
	0 Hunters	1 Farmers	2a Traders	2b Kings	3 Emperors	7 Modern
Place						
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						
L						

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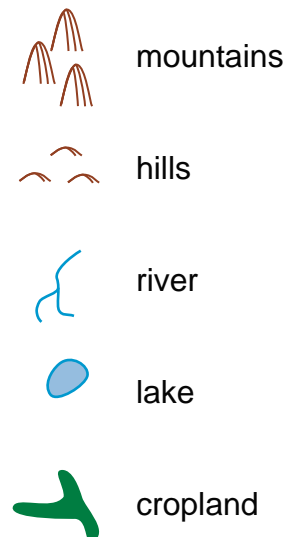


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TEACHER NOTES - LOCATIONS OF ANCIENT CAPITALS

Overview. This lesson uses a computer presentation to guide a whole-class simulation. The clickable pdf lets you customize the activity form to fit your objectives. The 12 places on the map are all real places – see the next page for background details. The “script” below puts modern names in parentheses for reference, but the activity works better if you use generic phrases like “western edge” or “river junction” and do NOT mention the modern names for places until the debriefing (when the map is rotated to reveal the modern relationships).

Learner outcomes. The main “take-home message” for students is that people viewed different locations as important at different times in history, for reasons that reflect the technological development and economic and social conditions of each era (GLCEs 6G221, 6G222, 6G414, 6G432):

Prehistory. During this time, humans lived primarily by hunting and gathering. They did best in places with mild climate and somewhat complex terrain (which can support a variety of plants and animals). Proximity to a lake or river added a source of water (and fish as a potential food). If students see only a black map with 12 letters on it, they might choose a central location or a protected one on a peninsula (K) or bay (L). If they see a map of rainfall, they are likely to choose places A (Rift highlands), B (Ethiopia), and K (Canaan/Judea/Palestine) more frequently than other lettered places on the map. Knowledge of the locations of lakes and rivers may encourage votes for other locations – a teacher might caution students that a lake in a desert (place H) is likely to be salty (though this one was fresh back when the Sahara was rainier).

Era 1: Beginnings. During this era, people began farming, especially on river floodplains with soft, easy-to-work soil. If the map shows areas with fertile soil, students are likely to choose places C (at the junction of the White Nile and Blue Nile rivers) and I (at the head of the Nile Delta). Meanwhile, it is important to emphasize that hunters and gatherers (e.g. at places A, B, and K) could continue with that lifestyle, though their relative importance declined as farming regions gained population and wealth.

Era 2a: Traders. As population and wealth continued to grow, people invented boats and other technologies for transporting goods and people. Locations along trade routes became important. Places near shallow river crossings, rapids, and waterfalls became especially useful, because roads would converge there, and river traffic had to portage around the obstacles. Places near D (the gold mines of Nubia near the second cataract of the Nile) and E (Aswan, near the first cataract) became quite important at various times during this era.

Era 2b: Early cities. In a dry climate, people must add water to fields in order raise crops. Irrigation can produce a tremendous increase in food production per square mile of land. This allowed some people to choose other occupations, including education, religion, arts, and government. These in turn aided agriculture by developing engineering designs, legal systems, and political infrastructures to support increasingly complex irrigation systems. Places I (Memphis/ Giza) and F (Thebes/Karnak) were able to support rapid growth of urban populations – place C lagged behind, because it had less cropland and a more isolated location.

Era 3: Empires. The Nile Valley was a great place to start urban civilization, but potential growth was limited by the relatively small amount of fertile soil and irrigation water in the valley. Places like Persia and Rome eventually became powerful empires that conquered Egypt and made it a colony. Place J (Alexandria) emerged during Greek and Roman times as a center of colonial trade and government – it is effectively on the border between agricultural Egypt and the trade-based empires around the Mediterranean Sea. (It’s Caesar and Cleopatra time!)

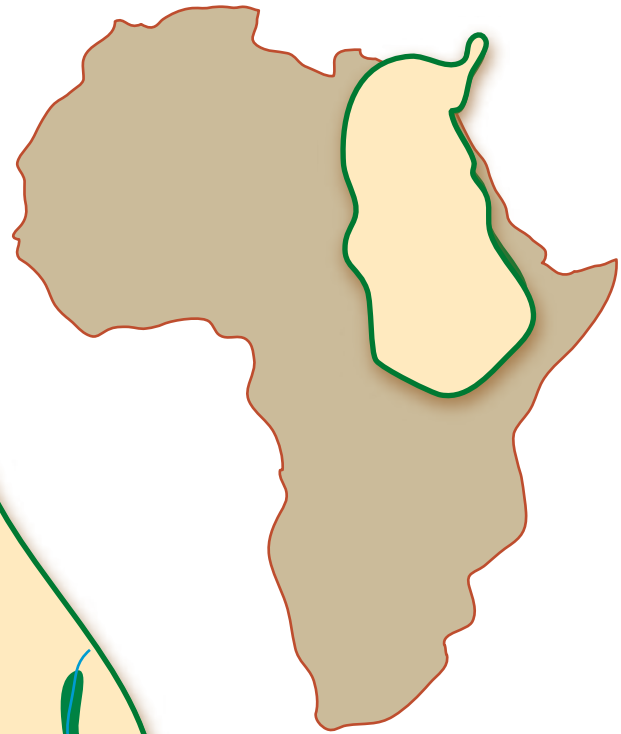
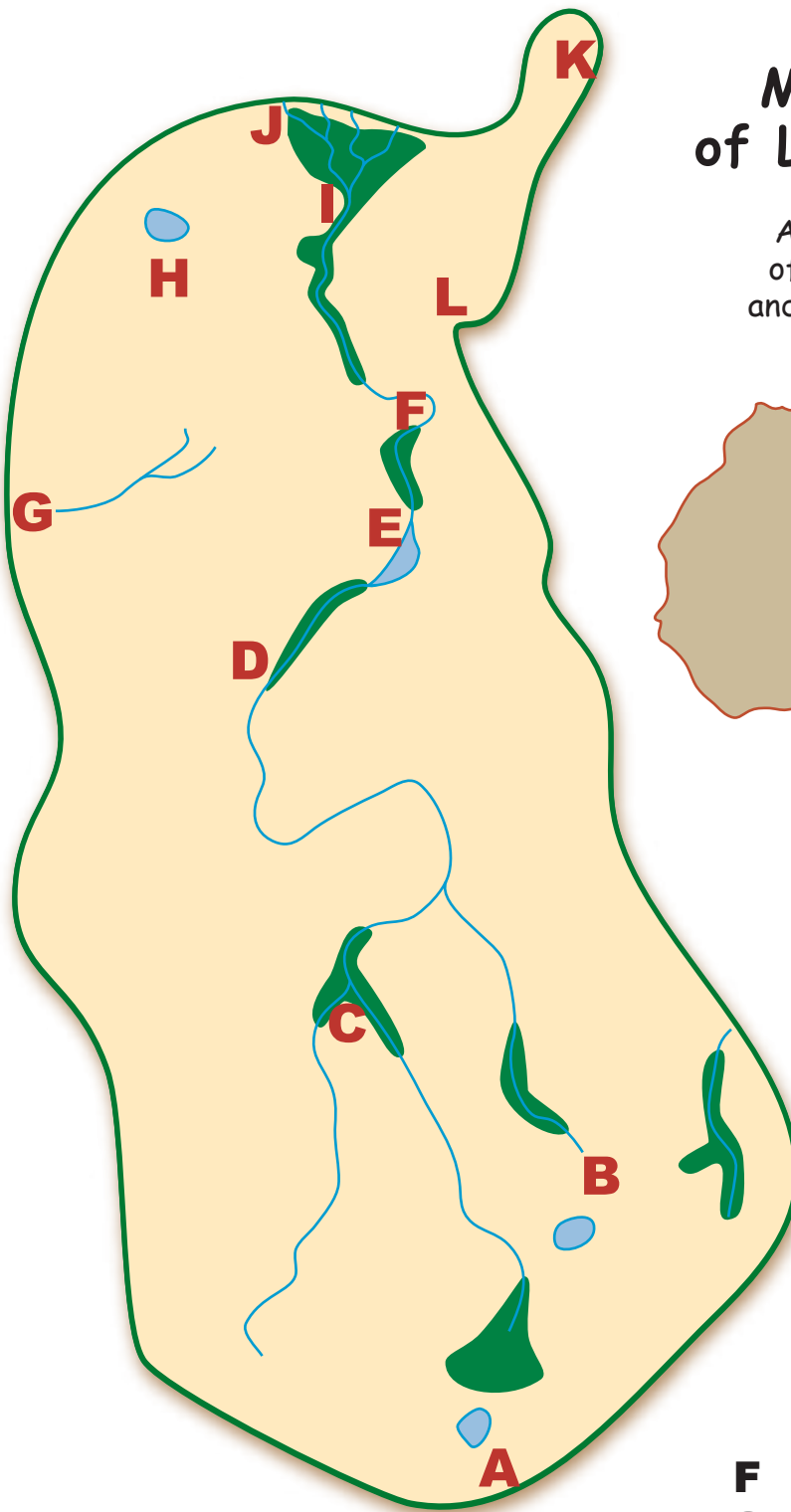
Later eras: When the British divided this region, places I and C became the capitals of newly independent Egypt and Sudan. I (Cairo) was located across the river from Memphis, the Old Kingdom capital of Egypt, and C (Khartoum) near a regional capital of ancient Meroe.

Background on the choices in the Locating a Capital simulation

- A. Omo valley is one of the places where archaeologists have found fossil evidence for very early human settlement. Students often choose this site early in the simulation, because it has hills, lakes, and plenty of rain – in short, it is a good place for subsistence living by hunting and gathering.
- B. Highlands of Ethiopia are mentioned several times in the Bible. This area was occupied as long as the Nile Valley. These highlands are remote and somewhat rugged, better for subsistence than for trying to amass great wealth and military power, although the capitals of several regional empires were located in this area at times when the Nile Valley was weak or divided.
- C. Khartoum is the capital of modern-day North Sudan. It has a modest amount of fertile land nearby, but its real advantage was a strategic location where the two main branches of the Nile join. As a result, it was always regionally important, but it is too far from major population centers to be a real power.
- D. The Second Cataract of the Nile is a major barrier to river travel, and therefore this place had some importance as a place to portage around the rapids and waterfalls. It had gold mines but little cropland, which made it a poor choice for even a regional capital throughout much of its history.
- E. The cataracts at Aswan were another barrier, but this area had more productive land and a larger population. In modern times, this is the site of one of the major hydroelectric dams in the world, which also diverts millions of gallons of water to irrigation projects on both sides of the Nile.
- F. Thebes (the Valley of the Kings) was well located for protection and local economic growth. At times, a capital in this area ruled the entire Nile Valley, but it could not really compete with any well-organized group in a more favorable location farther north, closer to the Mediterranean Sea.
- G. On the blank map, this place looks really out of the way, and in fact it was until trans-Saharan caravans became important thousands of years after the first Egyptian kings. To caravaners, a stopping place with water in the middle of the desert was really important, even if it could not grow very large.
- H. This out-of-the-way place looks better on the first map – a place in the desert with a lake nearby. Desert lakes, however, tend to accumulate salt and become unusable for drinking or even irrigation. The particular lake had fresh water thousands of years ago, but was already salty in Egyptian times.
- I. Students are likely to choose this strategic location at the head of the Nile Delta during the eras of valley farming and river trade. Perhaps best known as Memphis, this was the capital of several powerful Egyptian kingdoms. Not surprisingly, it is also the site of the Sphinx and Great Pyramids. Interestingly, Memphis, Tennessee, has a similar position in the Mississippi Delta – it is the last hilly area before the Mississippi River enters the flat floodplain that stretches to the Gulf of Mexico.
- J. The site of Alexandria was out of the way, flood-prone, and unimportant during much of Egyptian history. It gained strategic significance as a regional capital when the Greek and Roman empires relied on merchant ships to carry food, wine, cloth, tools, and salt across the Mediterranean Sea. Later, Alexandria became a center of learning and one of the ten largest cities in the world, although it was never the capital of its own great empire.
- K. The hills of Judea/Canaan/Samaria/Palestine are often called part of the “Fertile Crescent.” The land is actually hilly, rocky, and not particularly fertile, but it has more rain than many places. Students may therefore choose it as a place to live in the early stages of the simulation. Later, of course, this area became a kind of battleground between many opposed pairs of political entities – Egypt vs. Babylon, the Hittites, and Assyria; Greece and then Rome vs. Persia, Byzantium and then European Crusaders vs. Sultans and Turks; and now Palestine vs. Israel and Sunni vs. Shi’a.
- L. The tip of Sinai, by contrast, is a barren desert, of little importance to land-based powers. People trying to use the seas, however, call this a strategic location, a chokepoint along the route from the oilfields of Southwest Asia through the Suez Canal to the oil-hungry cities of Europe.

Modern Names of Location Options

Assessing the Influence
of Geographic Conditions
and Geographic Connections



- A** Omo Valley hominid fossil site
- B** highlands of Ethiopia
- C** Khartoum, capital of Sudan
- D** Second cataract of the Nile
- E** Aswan falls, modern dam

- F** Thebes, Valley of the Kings
- G** Strategic oasis in Sahara
- H** Salt lake, formerly fresh
- I** Memphis, pyramids & sphinx
- J** Alexandria, Greek/Roman city
- K** Hills of Palestine/Judea
- L** Sinai, entrance to Gulf of Suez