

# THE HYMN TO THE NILE

## Introduction:

Ancient Egyptian civilization was completely dependent on the Nile River. Its annual summer floods deposited rich soil along its banks, making the land very fertile. Egyptians also relied on the Nile for irrigation and transportation. The river was so important to their livelihoods that they often spoke of it in religious terms, referring to it as a god.

## Directions:

Here, you'll read the "Hymn to the Nile" to see how the Egyptians viewed the river. **As you read the text think about why the Nile was so important to the Egyptians and why they spoke of it and treated it with such respect.** This text reveals some of the ancient Egyptians' attitudes toward the Nile River. Read the excerpt and then answer the questions below.

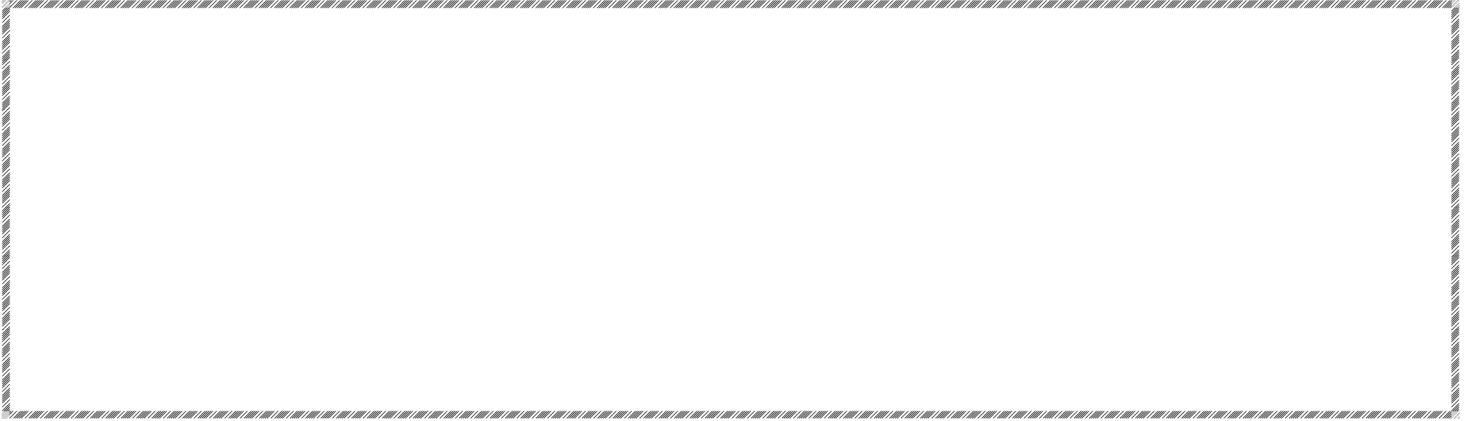
Here are some definitions that will help you read this text:

- Manifests: To reveal
- Ra: God of the sun; the most important Egyptian god
- Seb: God of the earth
- Nepera: God of grain
- Ptah: God who created Memphis, an ancient Egyptian capital; Ptah was also a god of craftsmen
- Perpetuity: eternal life, lasting forever
- Nun: the waters from which the god Ra first arose
- Immolated: sacrificed by burning

## VERSE 1

Hail to thee, O Nile! Who manifests thyself over this land, and comes to give life to Egypt! Mysterious is thy issuing forth from the darkness, on this day whereon it is celebrated! Watering the orchards created by Ra, to cause all the cattle to live, you give the earth to drink, inexhaustible one! Path that descends from the sky, loving the bread of Seb and the first fruits of Nepera, You cause the workshops of Ptah to prosper!

### HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THIS?



## VERSE 2

Lord of the fish, during the inundation, no bird alights on the crops. You create the grain, you bring forth the barley, assuring perpetuity to the temples. If you cease your toil and your work, then all that exists is in anguish. If the gods suffer in heaven, then the faces of men waste away. Then He torments the flocks of Egypt, and great and small are in agony. But all is changed for mankind when He comes; He is endowed with the qualities of Nun. If He shines, the earth is joyous, every stomach is full of rejoicing, every spine is happy, every jaw-bone crushes (its food).

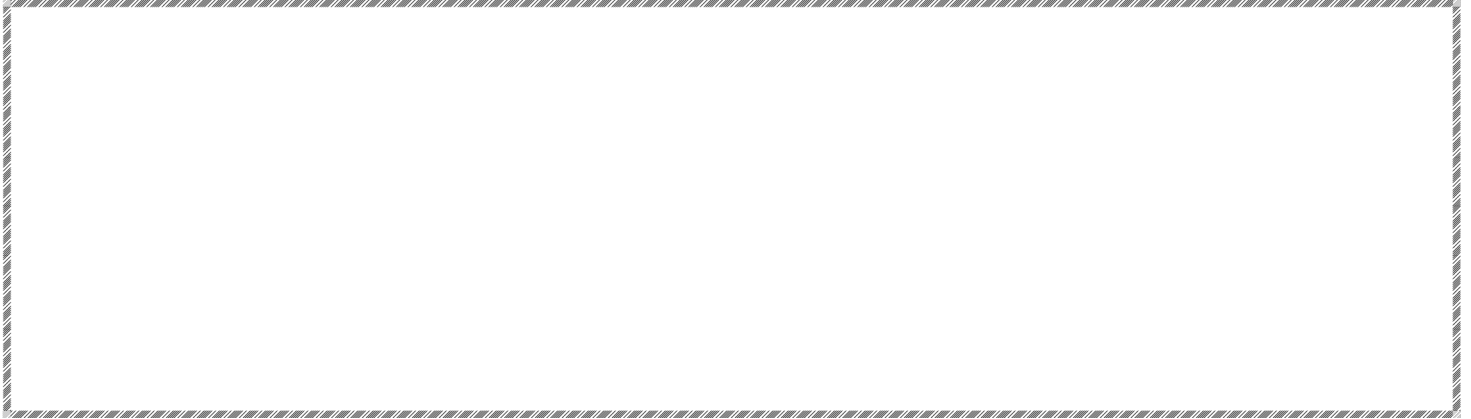
### HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THIS?



## VERSE 3

He brings the offerings, as chief of provisioning; He is the creator of all good things, as master of energy, full of sweetness in his choice. If offerings are made it is thanks to Him. He brings forth the herbage for the flocks, and sees that each god receives his sacrifices. All that depends on Him is a precious incense. He spreads himself over Egypt, filling the granaries, renewing the marts, watching over the goods of the unhappy...

**HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THIS?**



## VERSE 4

O inundation of the Nile, offerings are made unto you, men are immolated to you, great festivals are instituted for you. Birds are sacrificed to you, gazelles are taken for you in the mountain, pure flames are prepared for you. The Nile has made its retreats in Southern Egypt, its name is not known beyond the Tuau. The god manifests not his forms, He baffles all conception.

**HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THIS?**





