Rivers are very important in history and geography. Early civilizations settled near major river systems for fresh drinking water, to irrigate crops, for transportation and to serve as a natural defense against enemies.

FRESH WATER
Unlike oceans, rivers are a valuable source of fresh water. A reliable source of drinking water is necessary for survival. Before modern water systems, reservoirs and aqueducts were developed, it was necessary that a group of people settle near a source of fresh water. Even today, most large cities are located near a major river system.

IRRIGATION
Early cultures were able to develop because they could mastered agriculture and many people could settle one area and stay there. Rivers are very important in order to be able to irrigate crops. Relying on rainfall is insufficient for sustained agriculture. On the other hand, being located near a river runs the risk of being in danger of seasonal flooding.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
Rivers are also used for transportation purposes. Before the invention of a railroad, if a city was not located near a navigable body of water it could not import or export goods easily, thus increasing the cost and making them less competitive.

NATURAL BOARDERS
Rivers are natural boarders between many countries. Also, many times a river flows from one country to another which could lead to tensions as one country pollutes the water or utilizes too much water before it gets to the other country downriver (such as the Colorado River is almost depleted before it can get to Mexico).

DEFENSE
Rivers can serve as a natural barrier protecting a group by making a large scale crossing difficult. On the other hand, before modern technology, not being near a river may also protect a nation since they are not easily accessible to a conquering nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Antarctica</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>South America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longest River</td>
<td>Nile River</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yangtze River</td>
<td>Murray-Darling</td>
<td>Volga River</td>
<td>Mississippi-Missouri</td>
<td>Amazon River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>4,135 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3,917 miles</td>
<td>2,094 miles</td>
<td>2,266 miles</td>
<td>3,902 miles</td>
<td>3,980 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RIVERS TO LABEL ON MAP:
1. Amazon (Brazil)
2. Amur (Russia, China)
3. Arkansas (US)
4. Brahmaputra (China, Nepal, India)
5. Colorado (US)
6. Columbia (US)
7. Congo (Dem Rep of Congo)
8. Danube (Germany to Romania)
9. Darling (Australia)
10. Dnieper (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine)
11. Don (Russia)
12. Euphrates (Turkey, Syria, Iraq)
13. Ganges (India)
14. Huang or Yellow (China)
15. Indus (China, India, Pakistan)
16. Lena (Russia)
17. Mackenzie (Canada)
18. Madeira (Bolivia, Brazil)
19. Mekong (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam)
20. Mississippi (US)
21. Missouri (US)
22. Nile (Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan, Egypt)
23. Niger (Mali, Niger, Nigeria)
24. Ob (Russia)
25. Ohio (US)
26. Orange (South Africa, Namibia)
27. Parana (Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina)
28. Rhine (France, Germany, Netherlands)
29. Rio Grande (US, Mexico)
30. Sao Francisco (Brazil)
31. Seine (France)
32. Senegal (Mali, Senegal, Mauritania)
33. St Lawrence (US, Canada)
34. Syr Darya (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan)
35. Tagus (Spain, Portugal)
36. Thames (United Kingdom)
37. Tigris (Turkey, Iraq)
38. Ural (Russia, Kazakhstan)
39. Volga (Russia)
40. Wisla (Poland)
41. Xi (China)
42. Yangtze or Chang (China)
43. Yenisey (Russia)
44. Yukon (Canada, Alaska)
45. Zambezi (Zambia, Mozambique)