

Finn's Journey: The Life of a River

Learning objective: To understand the stages of a river and the geographical processes that shape the landscape.

Read the passage below carefully, then answer the questions that follow. Ensure you use evidence from the text to support your points.

Finn the dolphin loves to travel upstream to visit the river's source, high in the misty mountains. Here, the water is cold and moves with great speed over steep gradients. As the river flows downhill, it carves through the landscape, picking up sediment. Further down, the river enters the middle course, where it begins to wind in wide curves known as meanders. Finn often watches as the water deposits sand and silt along the inner banks. When smaller streams, called tributaries, join the main river at a confluence, the volume of water increases significantly. Finally, the river reaches its mouth, or estuary. Here, the water slows down as it meets the sea. The landscape is much flatter, and the river broadens, creating a vital habitat for diverse wildlife. This journey from the high, rocky source to the deep, salty sea is a continuous cycle of movement and change, shaped by the relentless power of water over thousands of years.

Word bank: source · meander · tributary · confluence · estuary · erosion · deposition · gradient

1. Identify two features of the river's upper course mentioned in the text. (2 marks)

2. What happens to the river's volume when it meets a tributary at a confluence? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the water might move more slowly in the river's lower course compared to the source. (3 marks)

4. Infer why the estuary is described as a 'vital habitat' for wildlife. (3 marks)

5. Justify why the author describes the river's journey as a 'continuous cycle'. Do you agree with this description? Explain your reasoning. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw a labelled diagram of a river's journey from the mountains to the sea. Include the source, a meander, a confluence, and the estuary.



Extension challenge: Research how human activity might affect a river's natural course. Write a persuasive paragraph explaining why it is important to protect river ecosystems from pollution.