

Mapping Our Settlements with Finn the Dolphin

Learning objective: To understand the factors influencing the location and development of human settlements.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Use your knowledge of geography to explain why humans choose certain locations for their homes.

Finn the dolphin spends his days mapping the winding rivers that flow towards the sea. He has noticed that humans rarely build their homes randomly. Instead, they choose locations that offer safety, resources, and trade opportunities. Many ancient settlements began at a confluence, where two rivers meet, providing a reliable water supply and a way to transport goods by boat. As populations grew, these small hamlets often developed into bustling market towns. Factors such as flat land, known as low-relief topography, make it easier to construct roads and buildings. Furthermore, proximity to fertile soil is essential for agriculture, ensuring a steady food supply for the community. In the modern era, some settlements have transformed into major cities due to their strategic position near natural resources like coal or iron. However, Finn observes that human settlement patterns are constantly shifting. As infrastructure like railways and motorways expand, people are no longer restricted to building near rivers. Today, urbanisation continues to change our landscape, as humans adapt their environment to suit their needs, creating complex networks of towns and cities across the globe.

Word bank: settlement · topography · infrastructure · fertile · tributary · confluence · urbanisation

1. Identify two natural features mentioned in the text that would encourage people to build a settlement in a specific location. (2 marks)

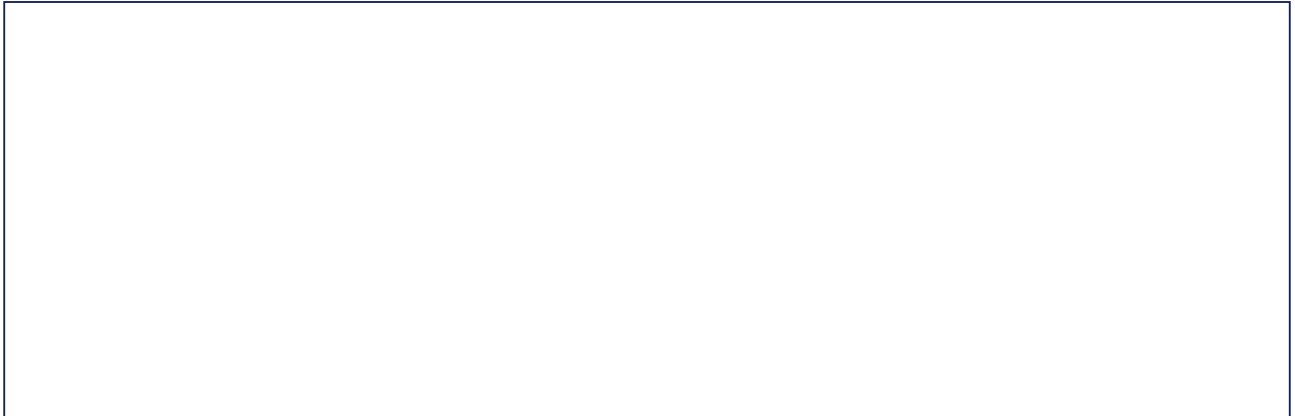
2. According to the text, why did many early settlements begin at a confluence? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the invention of motorways and railways changed where humans choose to build their homes. (3 marks)

4. Compare and contrast the needs of an ancient farming village with a modern-day city. What is the most significant difference in their requirements? (3 marks)

5. Do you think it is better for a town to be built near a river or near a major motorway? Justify your answer using geographical reasoning. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw a bird's-eye view map of an imaginary settlement. Include a river, a bridge, a main road, a cluster of houses, and a marketplace. Label your features.



Extension challenge: Research the term 'site' and 'situation' in geography. Write a short paragraph explaining how these two terms differ when describing why a city like London was originally founded. What might happen to a settlement if its primary natural resource, such as a local coal mine, suddenly ran out?