

**New  
Internationalist**

# Rivers

Easy English New Internationalist Ready Lesson: Intermediate +

# This lesson:

- Discussion of images
- Vocabulary
- Quiz + infographic
- Dictation
- Reading
- Writing – creating a poster

a) Where? What? Why? Who?



b) Where? What? Why? Who?



# c) Where? What? Why? Who?



# Now match the images to the descriptions:

1/ Hindu women pray to the sun god by going into the waters of the Yamuna River. It is an important tributary of the Ganges in New Delhi, India. The water is covered in foam. The river is responsible for 70 per cent of the city's water. But it is seriously polluted here. Recently city authorities are using blowers to push back the foam from the banks during festivals, so that people can take a holy bath. ADNAN ABIDI/REUTERS

2/ At Chattogram, Bangladesh, children in the water in the Karnaphuli. IHSAAN EESA/ALAMY

3/ Collecting sand from the Ubangi River, Central African Republic, for use in the construction industry. A diver brings it up from the river bed in a bucket and a colleague pulls it up onto a boat. In other places, most sand extraction is mechanized. WILLIAM DANIELS/PANOS

a)



b)



c)



## Vocabulary - match

a) wetlands

b) vertebrate

c) wastewater

d) dam

e) irrigation

1/ an animal with a backbone:  
mammals, fish, amphibians, birds  
and reptiles

2/ bringing water to land or crops  
in channels

3/ water that has been used in  
industry, business, or toilets and  
baths in homes

4/ marsh or swamps – land with a  
lot of water

5/ a barrier to stop the water and  
create a reservoir

# KEY:

- a) wetlands 4
- b) vertebrate 1
- c) wastewater 3
- d) dam 5
- e) irrigation 2

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# Dictation:

(one person read out the next slide to the group)

Then check with the next slide

Now check your dictation:

Rivers, lakes, and swamps are about only 0.3 per cent of all the water on our planet (more than 90 per cent of all the water cannot be used by humans and many other species). But over 140,000 species and many more we don't know about live in the freshwater. This includes 55 per cent of all fish species. A surprising 40 per cent of all the world's species live or breed in the wetlands around the world's rivers. A quarter of the world's people depend on rivers for drinking water. And about a quarter of food production depends on water from the rivers and the fertility of floodplains that feed us. Rivers truly are life, and that is why traditional cultures believe that they are sacred.

# Quiz: what do you think?

1/ What % of rivers is protected by law?

a) 100% b) > 50% c) <10%

2/ How many people rely on rivers for drinking water?

a) 1 billion b) 2 billion c) 5 billion

3/ How many people get their livelihoods from fishing in rivers? a) 10 million b) 30 million c) 60 million

4/ What % of Earth's surface is covered by rivers?

a) >10% b) 3% c) <1%

5/ Rivers are home to what % of all vertebrates?

a) 50% b) 33% c) 10%

6/ How many freshwater species are in danger of extinction? a) 50% b) 33% c) 10%

7/ What % of wastewater is not treated before going into rivers, lakes and oceans?

a) 80% b) 50% c) 10%

8/ How much of the plastic waste in oceans is transported by rivers? a) >90% b) 50% c) <30%

Now check your answers on the infographic:

[https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=Rivers: holy\\_waters](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=Rivers: holy_waters)  
(scroll down!)

Or on the next 2 slides

How many problems can you list related to rivers from the quiz?

# RIVERS

# THE FACTS



## VITAL STATISTICS

**165**

major rivers in the world, according to most estimates.  
Minor rivers (many of which are tributaries) number in the thousands.

**64%**

of rivers >1,000km in length are no longer free-flowing.<sup>1</sup>

**<10%**

of river basins are protected by law.<sup>2</sup>

**263**

transboundary river courses, affecting 145 countries.<sup>3</sup>



## LIFE SUPPORT<sup>4</sup>

**2bn**

people rely on rivers for drinking water.

**500m**

people live on deltas sustained by sediment from rivers.

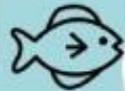
**25%**

of world food production is dependent on river irrigation.



**60m**

people get their livelihoods from river fisheries; 55% are women.



## BIODIVERSITY

Covering less than 1% of Earth's surface, freshwater habitats (including lakes) are home to 10% of all species and 1/3rd of all vertebrates.<sup>5</sup>



**84%**

decline in freshwater species populations since 1970, the starkest for any biome.

**1 in 3**

freshwater species are threatened with extinction.<sup>6</sup>

**>80%**

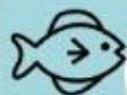
of wetlands have been lost since pre-industrial times.<sup>7</sup>

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## POLLUTION

**80%** of wastewater is dumped untreated into rivers, lakes and oceans. Richer countries treat a much higher percentage (70%) than the poorest (8%).<sup>8</sup>

Severe pathogen pollution (from excreta) affects 1/3 of all river stretches in Africa, Asia and Latin America.<sup>8</sup>

**91%** of plastic waste in the oceans is transported by rivers.<sup>9</sup>



## DAMMED UP

**2.8m** total number of large and medium-sized dams in the world.<sup>1</sup> Countless smaller dams exist.

**1,249** large dams in protected areas; 509 more are planned.<sup>10</sup>

**1.07 gigatons** of CO<sub>2</sub> - equivalent of greenhouse gases produced yearly by dams, greater than all of Germany's emissions. Dams also disrupt rivers' capacity to sequester carbon.<sup>11</sup>

Up to 80 million people have been displaced by dams with over 470 million more affected downstream.<sup>12</sup> The estimate for dam-displaced people in India alone is 50m.<sup>13</sup>

Discuss in small groups solutions to these problems:

1/ lack of protection by law

2/ amount of water that can be used by humans

3/ extinction of species

4/ untreated wastewater

5/ people who rely on rivers for water and fish

6/ carrying plastics to the ocean

7/ loss of wetlands

8/ dams

9/ pollution

Now read this article to find out more about some of these problems and solutions:

[https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=Rivers: holy\\_waters](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=Rivers: holy_waters)

- Make a note of 5 interesting points in the article
- Then share your interesting points with your group

# Writing:

In groups, create a poster to raise awareness about rivers:

- Decide on the facts / information you want to include
- Decide how to present the information
- Plan and create images to draw attention to the poster
- Think about colours and type of writing
- Create your poster!
- Look at and discuss all the posters when they are finished

# Homework:

Now read the original version of the article and you will find you understand it all, and you'll learn lots of new vocabulary and grammar!:

<https://newint.org/features/2022/06/08/big-story-rivers-holy-waters-dams>