

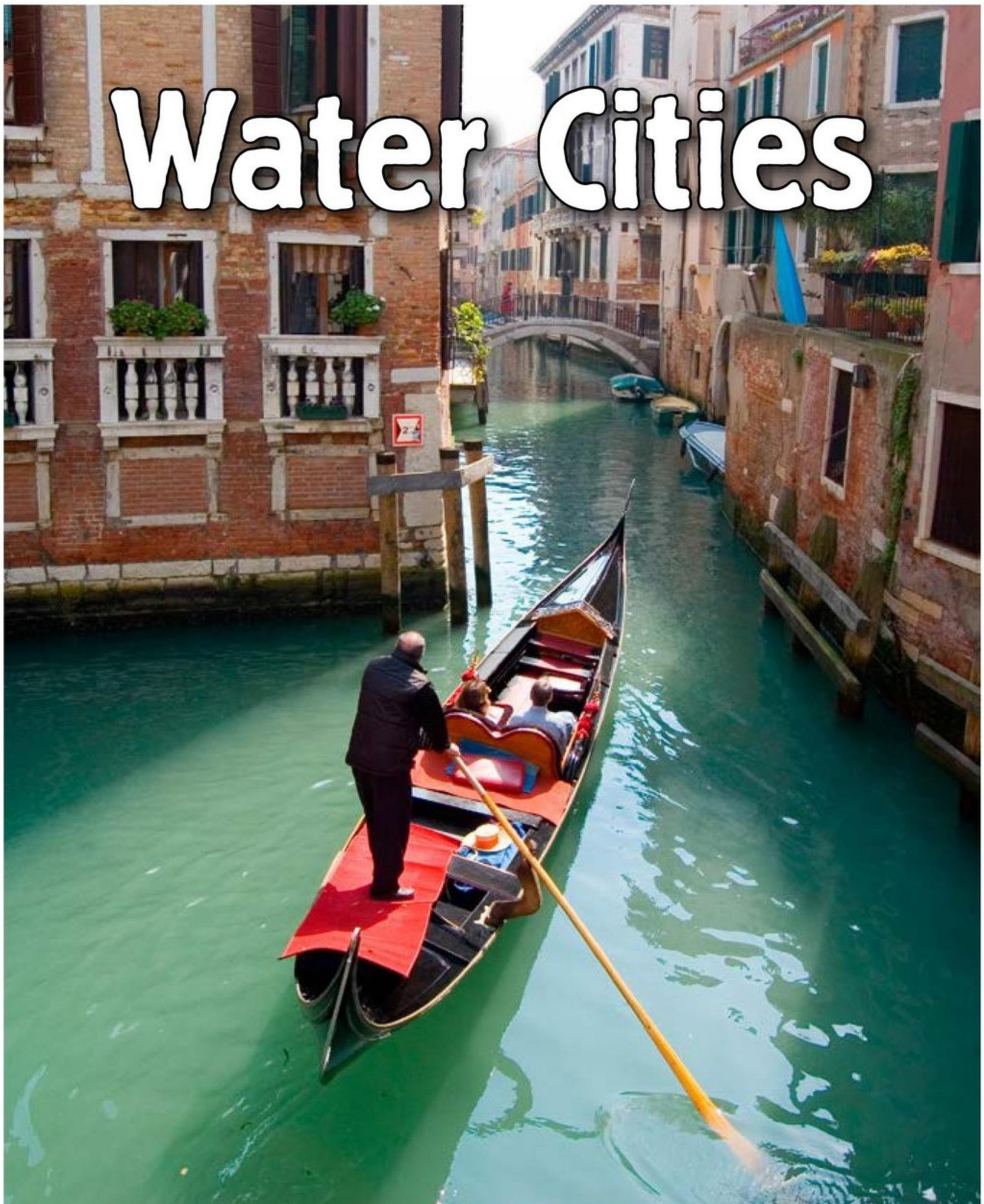
LEVELED Book • X

Water Cities

MULTI
level
R•U•X

Written by Kira Freed

www.readinga-z.com



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Focus Question

What are some features of water cities?

Words to Know

adaptability
amenities
breakwater
concentric
disintegrate
diversity

innovation
isthmus
reclaimed
seaport
stilt
urban

Front cover: Boats are the main transportation on the Grand Canal waterway in Venice.

Title page: A gondola in Venice floats down a small residential canal.

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Water Cities Around the World



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|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Venice, Italy | 5. Palm Jumeirah, Dubai | 9. Mexcaltitán, Mexico |
| 2. Amsterdam, Netherlands | 6. Ganvié, Benin | 10. Auckland, New Zealand |
| 3. Reine, Norway | 7. Fadiouth, Senegal | 11. Sausalito, California |
| 4. Singapore | 8. Uros Floating Village, Peru | 12. Manarola, Italy |

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The Grand Canal is the main waterway of Venice.

Living Near Water

People from across the globe flock to Venice, Italy, to see the famous city of canals and bridges built on more than a hundred islands. Although Venice is the world's best-known water city, it is by no means the only one.

Water cities are places that are built on or near a body of water. They range from tiny communities to huge **urban** areas and are located alongside—or in—oceans, seas, bays, lakes, and rivers on every continent in the world except Antarctica. They exist for many reasons, and each one has a fascinating story to tell.

Europe

Amsterdam, Netherlands

Amsterdam is another European city famous for its canals. It is the capital and largest city in the Netherlands, a country with roughly one-third of its land below sea level. About 17 percent of the country is built on polders—large areas of land that people have **reclaimed** from lakes and the North Sea by pumping out water. Amsterdam itself is about 2 meters (6.6 ft.) *below* sea level. The city was founded in the late twelfth century as a fishing village and became an important **seaport** in the seventeenth century. It is now one of Europe's largest seaports.



Amsterdam has more than 1,200 bridges over its canals.

Amsterdam was encircled by a moat from 1480 to 1585. Its population surged in the 1600s as the city grew. Workers drained swampland and built three more **concentric** half-circle canals around the downtown area. The four waterways were used for transportation, defense, and water management. Besides the main canals, about 160 others, totaling over 100 kilometers (62 mi.) in length, divide Amsterdam into close to 100 small islands joined by over 1,200 bridges. Although the canals were the city's main transportation routes for centuries, they are now mainly used by smaller barges and boats. However, they continue to play a key role in the city's distinctive character.



Reine, Norway

A tiny Norwegian fishing village more than 100 kilometers (62 mi.) above the Arctic Circle has earned the nickname "The Most Beautiful Place in the World." Located along the coast of one of the Lofoten Islands, Reine offers fishing, kayaking, skiing, whale watching, hiking, and gorgeous beaches. It's also a perfect place for dramatic views of the northern lights.



Singapore is one of the world's busiest port cities.



Singapore

Asia

Singapore is the world's only island city-state—an island that is both a city and an independent country. It is composed of sixty-three islands. The country has few natural resources, so it must import almost everything.

Projects begun in the 1960s have increased Singapore's land area by almost 25 percent. Unlike Amsterdam, which has reclaimed land by removing seawater, Singapore has extended its coastline by dumping rocks and sand into the water. A project launched in 2016 will pump out water to create polders, as in Amsterdam.

Urbanization over the years has prompted the government to plant greenery and turn Singapore into a city in a garden. Close to one-tenth of its land is now parks and nature reserves.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Dubai is the capital of one of seven political territories in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The country became wealthy due to the discovery of oil in the 1960s. Its economy is now focused on tourism, real estate, and other industries.

Dubai is the site of many construction projects, including Palm Islands—three artificial islands shaped like palm trees. The islands are being built along the coast by piling up enormous amounts of sand and rock. They are adding hundreds of miles of coastline to the city as well as residences for many thousands of people. Construction began in 2001; the first one was completed in late 2016. A crescent-shaped **breakwater** around the island protects it from strong waves and storms.



Palm Jumeirah is one of the largest artificial islands in the world.



The village of Ganvié is sometimes called the Venice of Africa.



Ganvié, Benin

In startling contrast to the modernity of Singapore and Dubai is Ganvié (GAWN-vye), the largest **stilt** village in Africa. The village is located in the middle of Lake Nokoué (NOHK-we) in the country of Benin. Ganvié has about twenty thousand residents and three thousand buildings. Only the school and a partially built cemetery are located on land.

Ganvié had its origins in the seventeenth-century West African slave trade. During that period, a powerful tribe named the Fon captured and sold people from other tribes into slavery. The Fons' religion prohibited them from pursuing people who lived on water.

Another tribe, the Tofinu, fled to Lake Nokoué to avoid capture. They founded the stilt village and established a way of life that thrives to this day. Their success is reflected in the name of their village, which means “we survived.”

Villagers rely in large part on fishing for their livelihood. They contain and breed fish using a network of underwater fences. They also keep chickens and goats on patches of grass that grow in the water. People travel in long, narrow canoes called *pirogues*.



Fadiouth (Shell Island), Senegal

The residents of Fadiouth (fad-YOOT), Senegal, live on an island made up entirely of clamshells. For over three centuries, they have been eating clams and recycling the shells to make not only buildings and streets but also the land itself. The shells are held in place by the roots of trees and reeds.



The Uru people make reed canoes for transportation.

South America

Uros Floating Village, Peru

Like the Tofinu, the residents of Uros, a floating village in Peru, moved to water for safety. The Uru people fled to Lake Titicaca over five hundred years ago when the Inca and Colla peoples took over their land. Approximately two thousand Uru now live on about seventy floating islands made of totora reeds. The islands, which are 1.2 to 2.4 meters (4–8 ft.) thick, **disintegrate** from the bottom. New reeds are continually added to the top.

The Uru people also use the reeds to make canoes, homes, and furniture. They make their living from fishing and selling handicrafts. Though the Uru maintain old traditions, they enjoy some modern **amenities**. The community has a radio station, and some residents have solar panels and motorboats.



Mexcaltitán rests on an isolated bar of sand 400 meters (1,300 ft.) long off the Pacific coast of Mexico.

North America

Mexcaltitán, Mexico

The Aztec people ruled large areas of Mesoamerica between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to legend, they came from Aztlán (ahst-LAHN), a mythical island in a lagoon, which might have been a real place located in northern Mexico. Then their gods instructed them to seek out a new homeland. After a pilgrimage of two hundred years, they founded Tenochtitlán, their capital city. After the Spanish conquest in 1521, Tenochtitlán became known as Mexico City.

Some historians think that Mexcaltitán (mes-kahl-tee-TAHN), a small human-made island near the Pacific coast of Mexico, is where the Aztec civilization had its beginnings. Ancient manuscripts show that the early Aztecs traveled by canoes similar to those used by the inhabitants of Mexcaltitán. Furthermore, a map from 1579 shows Aztlán and Mexcaltitán to be in exactly the same place.

Mexcaltitán, which is about 350 meters (1,150 ft.) by 40 meters (130 ft.), is now home to about eight hundred people. They live in tile-roofed houses made of adobe, brick, and cement. Many make their living by catching shrimp for local restaurants. This water town is sometimes called the Mexican Venice.

In summer during the rainy season, boats are the only way to travel through the streets. The local children have fun playing “water soccer” on the island’s only soccer pitch, which is underwater.

Locals boat and swim in the streets during the flood season in Mexcaltitán.





Auckland is New Zealand's largest city.

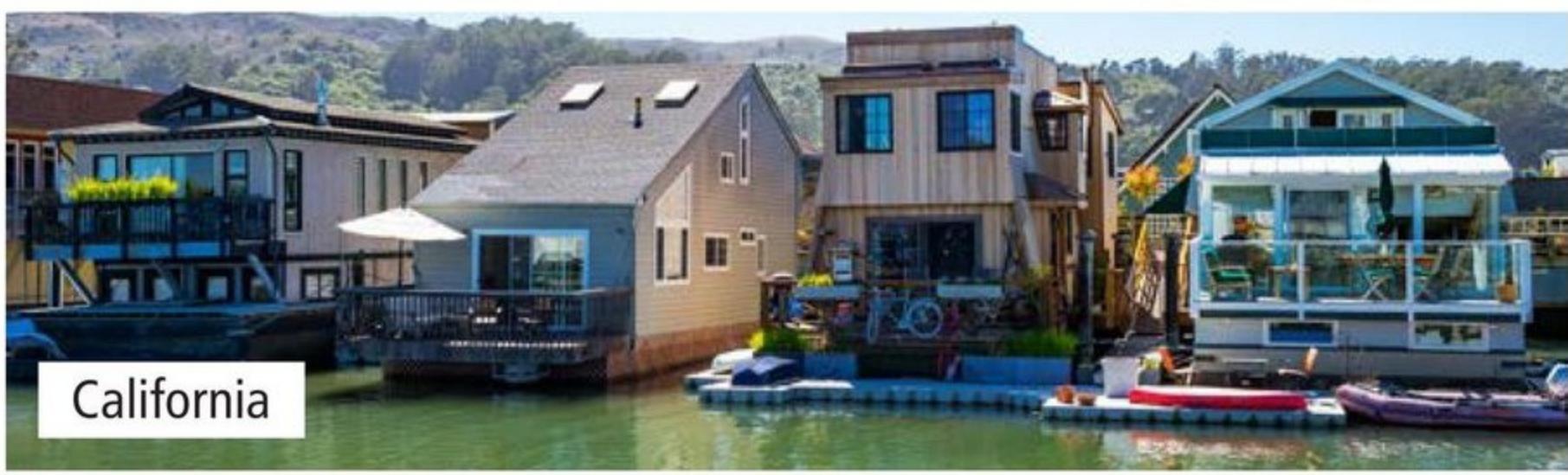
Oceania

Auckland, New Zealand



This modern city of 1.5 million people is on the North Island of New Zealand in the South Pacific Ocean. Auckland is located between two large harbors on an **isthmus** less than 2 kilometers (1.2 mi.) wide at its narrowest point. The harbors open to the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Tasman Sea to the west.

Auckland's nickname is the "City of Sails." About one-sixth of Aucklanders own a boat, and the city has hosted the America's Cup yacht race twice. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the thousands of beaches. Water-related activities include kayaking, parasailing, swimming, surfing, boating, fishing, diving, and beach horseback riding.



California



Italy



Aircraft carrier

People and Water

Many kinds of water cities exist besides the ones you've just read about. For instance, there's a tiny Italian fishing town made up of a jumble of brightly colored homes that cling to steep, rocky cliffs. A floating community located in Northern California has fancy, simple, and vintage houseboats. Aircraft carriers—huge seagoing ships designed to launch aircraft—house thousands of people in the military for months at a time.

Water represents different things to different people. For residents of water cities, it may mean recreation, a link to nature, or a way of life. It may also mean safety, survival, or an essential connection with the rest of the world. The remarkable **diversity** of water cities around the world is a testament to human **adaptability** and **innovation**.

Glossary

adaptability (<i>n.</i>)	the ability to change to fit a new or specific situation or environment (p. 15)
amenities (<i>n.</i>)	features that make something more convenient, comfortable, or pleasant (p. 11)
breakwater (<i>n.</i>)	a wall or barrier that is built in the sea to shelter a harbor or coast from the force of waves (p. 8)
concentric (<i>adj.</i>)	sharing the same center (p. 6)
disintegrate (<i>v.</i>)	to break into very small parts (p. 11)
diversity (<i>n.</i>)	a wide variety of many things (p. 15)
innovation (<i>n.</i>)	a new idea, product, or way of doing something; the act of introducing or inventing new things (p. 15)
isthmus (<i>n.</i>)	a narrow strip of land connecting two larger landmasses (p. 14)
reclaimed (<i>v.</i>)	took back or improved the condition of something to make it usable (p. 5)
seaport (<i>n.</i>)	a town or harbor that is used by seagoing ships (p. 5)
stilt (<i>n.</i>)	a post that supports a structure above the ground or water level; one of two long poles that allow a person to walk high above the ground (p. 9)
urban (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to cities or towns and the people living in them (p. 4)

Water Cities

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,309

Connections

Writing

Using a Venn diagram, compare two water cities from the book. Write a paragraph that summarizes the information.

Social Studies

Research a water city not described in the book. Create a travel brochure persuading tourists to visit the city. Include a map, photographs, and interesting information about the city.

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