

Water Cities

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,213

LEVELED BOOK • U

Water Cities

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.

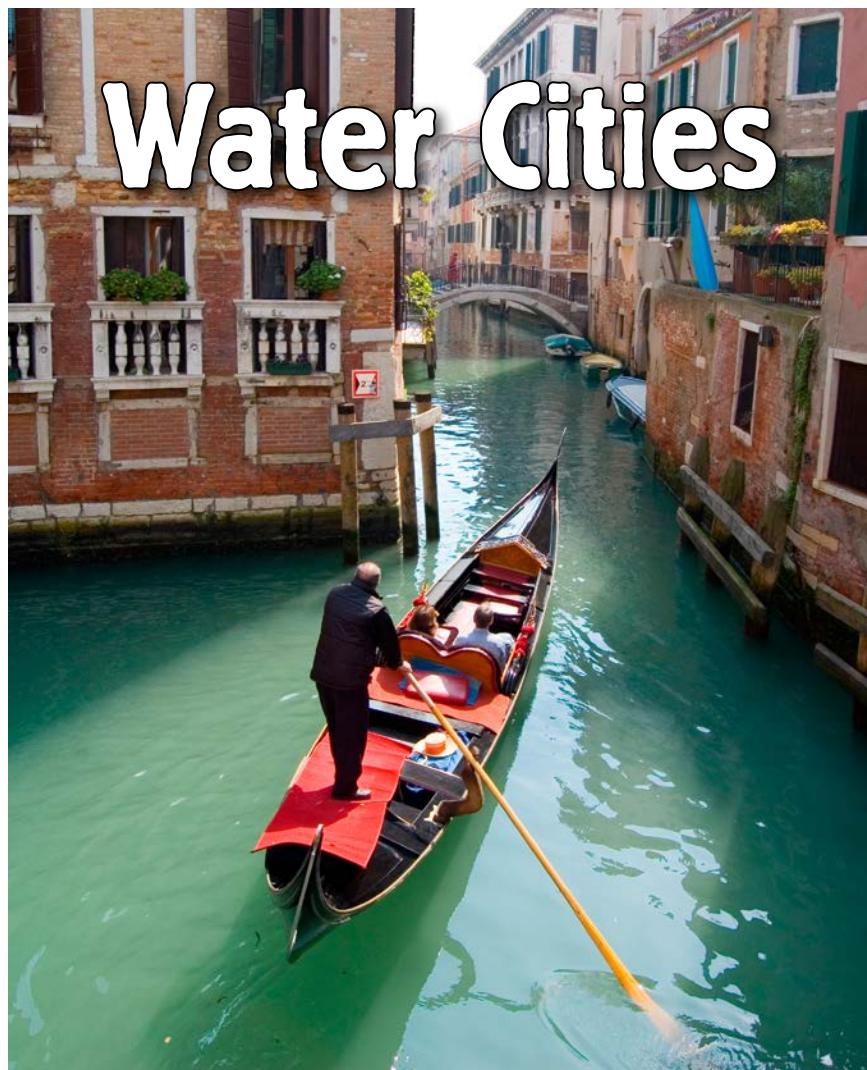
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Focus Question

What are some features of water cities?

Words to Know

adobe	reclaimed
artificial	residents
drained	seaport
import	stilt
isthmus	transportation
lagoon	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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Correlation

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The Grand Canal is the main waterway of Venice.

Living Near Water

People from across the globe come 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 definitely not the only one.

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

Europe

Amsterdam, Netherlands

Amsterdam is another European city that is famous for its canals. It is the capital of the Netherlands, a country with roughly one-third of its land below sea level. People have **reclaimed** about one-sixth of the land 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. It became an important **seaport** in the seventeenth century and is now one of Europe's largest seaports.



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

Amsterdam was surrounded by a moat from 1480 to 1585. Its population surged in the 1600s as the city grew. Workers **drained** swamps and built three more canals around the downtown area. The four waterways were used for **transportation**, defense, and water management. Besides the main canals, Amsterdam has 161 others, totaling over 100 kilometers (62 mi.) in length, that divide the city 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 boats. However, they are still an important part of the city's 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.

Asia

Singapore

Singapore is the world's only island city-state—an island that is both a city and an independent country. It is made up of sixty-three islands. Singapore depends on goods from other places since it has few natural resources of its own. The country must **import** almost everything it needs.

Singapore's land area has increased by almost 25 percent since the 1960s. Unlike Amsterdam, which has reclaimed land by removing seawater, Singapore has added land by dumping rocks and sand into the water. A project begun in 2016 will use Amsterdam's methods to increase its land area.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Located on the Persian Gulf, Dubai is a modern city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The city is the site of many construction projects.

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



Palm Jumeirah is the largest artificial island in the world.



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



Africa

Ganvié, Benin

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

Ganvié began during the seventeenth century, at a time when humans in West Africa were being captured and sold as slaves by Europeans. During that period, a powerful tribe called the Fon also captured and sold people from other tribes into slavery. The Fons' religion forbade them from pursuing people who lived on water. Another tribe, the Tofinu, escaped to Lake Nokoué to avoid capture. They founded the stilt village and set up a way of life that continues to this day. Their success is reflected in the name of their village, which means "we survived."

Villagers mainly make their living by fishing. They keep and breed fish using 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 people of Ganvié Lake Village, the residents of Uros, a floating village in Peru, moved to water for safety. The Uru people escaped to Lake Titicaca over five hundred years ago. At that time, the Inca and Colla peoples took over their land.

Approximately two thousand Uru now live on about seventy floating islands made of reeds. The islands, which are 1.2 to 2.4 meters (4–8 ft.) thick, break down from the bottom. New reeds must always be added on top.

The Uru people also use the reeds to make canoes, homes, and furniture. They make their living from fishing and selling crafts. Even though the Uru live by traditional ways, they have some modern conveniences. Uros has its own radio station, and some residents have solar panels and motorboats.



Mexcaltitán sits on a 400-meter (1,300 ft.) sandbar off Mexico's coast.

North America

Mexcaltitán, Mexico

The Aztec people ruled large areas of Mesoamerica between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to legend, they came from a mythical island in a **lagoon**, and their gods told them to seek out a new homeland. After searching for two hundred years, they founded Tenochtitlán, their capital city. After the Spanish conquest in 1521, Tenochtitlán became known as Mexico City.

Mexcaltitán (mes-kahl-tee-TAHN) is a small human-made island near the Pacific coast of Mexico. Some historians think Aztec civilization began there. Records show that the early Aztecs used small canoes like those used by Mexcaltitán's residents. In addition, a map from 1579 shows the mythical island and Mexcaltitán to be in 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 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. Children have fun playing "water soccer" on the island's only soccer field, 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. The city has thousands of beaches. Water-related activities include kayaking, parasailing, swimming, surfing, fishing, diving, and beach horseback riding.



People and Water

Many kinds of water cities exist besides the ones you've just read about. For instance, Italy has a tiny fishing town made up of brightly colored homes built on steep, rocky cliffs. Northern California has a floating community made up of different kinds of houseboats. Members of the military may spend months living on aircraft carriers.

Water represents different things to different people. For residents of water cities, it may mean recreation, work, safety, or a way of life. It may also mean a connection to nature or the rest of the world. Earth's water cities are proof that people can make a home for themselves just about anywhere.

Glossary

adobe (<i>n.</i>)	a mixture of sandy clay and straw that is dried into bricks (p. 13)
artificial (<i>adj.</i>)	human-made; not occurring naturally (p. 8)
drained (<i>v.</i>)	caused liquid or energy to flow or run out of something (p. 6)
import (<i>v.</i>)	to bring in goods from another country or state in order to sell them (p. 7)
isthmus (<i>n.</i>)	a narrow strip of land connecting two larger landmasses (p. 14)
lagoon (<i>n.</i>)	a shallow, calm body of water between a reef and the shoreline or in the center of an atoll (p. 12)
reclaimed (<i>v.</i>)	took back or improved the condition of something to make it usable (p. 5)
residents (<i>n.</i>)	people or other animals that live in a place (p. 9)
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)
transportation (<i>n.</i>)	the act of moving things or people from one place to another (p. 6)
urban (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to cities or towns and the people living in them (p. 4)