



"Rio Grande"

Reading Comprehension Assessment

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Name _____
 Date _____

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Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

The Rio Grande

Although not the longest river in America, the Rio Grande is one of the most important. But, unlike other significant rivers, it is not used for shipping. In fact, oceangoing ships cannot navigate the waters. No, what makes the Rio Grande so important is its location. Since 1846, it has been the official border of Texas and Mexico.



Rio Grande Geography

The Rio Grande is either the fourth or fifth longest river system in North America. It all depends on how it is measured. Because the river twists so much, it occasionally changes course. And these course shifts can cause it to be longer or shorter. At its last official measure, the Rio Grande clocked in at 1,896 miles. The river starts in Colorado and extends downward to the Gulf of Mexico.

Downward is the best way of describing it too. Not only does the river extend south, but it also starts in the mountains and gets lower and lower in elevation as it extends to the Gulf.

Its name is Spanish for the “Big River,” but the Rio Grande is actually known as Rio Bravo in Mexico. “Bravo” translates as “furious,” so the name makes sense. Because of its twists and turns, it certainly does seem to be angrier than most rivers!

The Rio Grande Today

The Rio Grande today is mostly used as a source of drinking water. Sadly, much of the water has been drained from the river. Parts of the river are almost dry! This is because people use more water from the river than the river can get back from rain and other sources. Experts are working to correct this, though, with hopes of restoring the river to its past strength.

Today, the river is important as a source of water for Texans and Mexicans. More important, it is a symbol of cooperation between two nations. Though borders like the Rio Grande separate nations, they are also shared spaces. The Rio Grande is therefore a symbol of friendship and peace between two peoples.

- 1) According to the passage, why is the Rio Grande so important?
 - A. It is a source of drinking water for most of the United States.
 - B. It is the border of Texas and Mexico.
 - C. It is the longest river system in the United States.
 - D. It is known by two different names.

- 2) In paragraph 3, the author most likely writes that “downward is the best way of describing it too” to
 - A. prove that the Rio Grande’s water levels have gone down recently
 - B. argue that the Rio Grande has changed shape over the years
 - C. highlight the fact that the Rio Grande flows south and from high elevations
 - D. explain why the Rio Grande is known as the Rio Bravo down in Mexico

3) Based on its use in paragraph 4, the word **furious** most nearly means

- A. angry
- B. large
- C. twisted
- D. dry

4) According to the passage, the Rio Grande has endpoints in

- A. Texas and the Gulf of Mexico
- B. New Mexico and Colorado
- C. Texas and Mexico
- D. Colorado and the Gulf of Mexico

5) At the beginning of the passage, we learn that the Rio Grande is "one of the most important" rivers in America. Can you think of another important landform that exists where you live? What makes it so important?

6) In paragraph 5, the author explains that the Rio Grande is slowly going dry. What do you think would happen if the river ever went completely dry? Why? Explain your predictions below.

1) **B**

Question Type: Global

In the first paragraph, the author writes that “what makes the Rio Grande so important is its location.” He or she adds that it is “the official border of Texas and Mexico.” This implies that its location as the border of Mexico and Texas is what makes the Rio Grande so important. Because of this, choice **(B)** is correct. The passage does suggest that the Rio Grande is the source of drinking water for people in Mexico and Texas, but the passage does not suggest it is a source of drinking water for most Americans. Therefore choice **(A)** is incorrect, because it is too extreme. The second paragraph states that “the Rio Grande is either the fourth or fifth longest river system in North America.” Because of this, choice **(C)** is not correct. The passage does say that the Rio Grande is known by two different names in Mexico and the United States. It does not suggest that the river is important because of its two names though. This means choice **(D)** is not correct.

2) **C**

Question Type: Inference

In the third paragraph, the author states that “downward is the best way of describing” the flow of the Rio Grande. He or she then explains what he or she means by that, stating that the river extends south and also “starts in the mountains and gets lower and lower in elevation.” This means that the river moves downward on a map (from north to south) and also in elevation. Because of this, choice **(C)** is not correct. The passage describes the amount of water in the Rio Grande going down in paragraph 5, not paragraph 3. This means that the sentence in question does not describe the water levels, so choice **(A)** is not correct. The passage states that the Rio Grande has changed shape, but it does so in paragraph 2, not paragraph 3. This means that the sentence in question does not describe the shape of the river, so choice **(B)** is not correct. The passage explains that the Rio Grande is known as the Rio Bravo in Mexico in paragraph 4, not paragraph 3. Also, the passage only states that it does have two names. It does not state *why* it has two names. Because of these points, choice **(D)** is not correct.

3) **A**

Question Type: Vocabulary

furious (*adjective*): very angry or mad.

In paragraph 4, the author states that “bravo” translates as “furious” in English and adds that the name “Rio Bravo” “makes sense.” We can use context clues—hints from known words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase—to figure out what the word furious most nearly means. He or she explains that it makes sense as a name because the river “does seem to be angrier.” This suggests that furious is closest in meaning to angry, so choice **(A)** is correct. The passage gives no indication that furious and large are similar in meaning. It describes the Rio Grande as “the fourth or fifth longest river system in North America,” not the longest. Additionally, it suggests that “bravo” translates as “furious” and that this makes sense because the river “seems angrier,” not because it seems larger. Because of this, choice **(B)** is not correct. The passage does suggest that the Rio Grande is “twisted” and that its twists make it seem “angrier than most rivers.” The twists are the reason the river appears angry, and the anger is what makes it appropriate to call the river furious. This means that furious and angry are similar in meaning, not furious and twisted. Because of this, choice **(C)** is not correct. The passage does say that the Rio Grande is going dry, but it does not suggest that the name Rio Bravo, or “the furious river,” is appropriate because the river is going dry. Rather, it suggests that it is appropriate to call the river furious because it appears “angrier.” The passage mentions the dryness of the river in paragraph 5, not paragraph 4. Because of this, choice **(D)** is not correct.

4) **D**

Question Type: Detail

To answer this detail question, we need to find the part of the passage that describes the location of the Rio Grande. This occurs in the middle section, the one labeled “Rio Grande Geography.” There, in paragraph 3, the author states that “the river starts in Colorado and extends downward to the Gulf of Mexico.” This means the river’s endpoints are Colorado and the Gulf of Mexico. It also means choice **(D)** is correct. The passage states that the Rio Grande separates Texas and Mexico. It does not state that the river starts in Texas though. Because of this, choice **(A)** is not correct. The passage never mentions New Mexico. Even though the Rio Grande starts in Colorado, it does not end in New Mexico. Because of this, choice **(B)** is not correct. The passage states that the Rio Grande separates Texas and Mexico. It does not state that the river starts in Texas though. Because of this, choice **(C)** is not correct.