

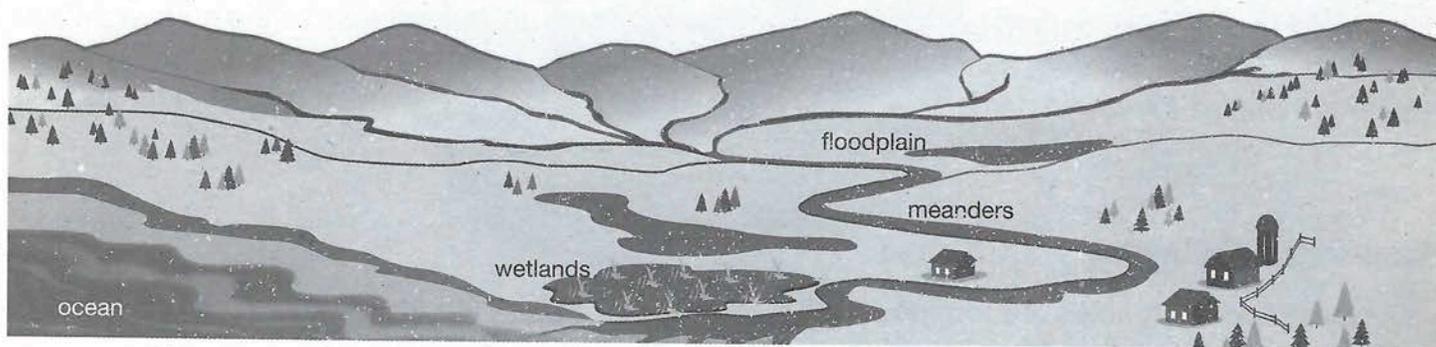
Rivers

A **river** is a stream of a usually large volume of water. Rivers typically begin in a natural hollow in the ground. This is called the **source** of the river. When rain falls into the hollow, a flow of water begins. Some rivers get their water not from rain, but from underground springs. Rivers can also begin at glaciers, marshes, or lakes; or they can start as mountain streams and join other streams that flow into a sea or an ocean.

A river can be a very powerful force in shaping the land. It wears down the rock it flows over, creating valleys and canyons. It can cut away land by abrasion, scratching and scraping away at the riverbed with the rocks and sediments that flow in the water, like a knife scraping at cardboard. Rivers carry sediment, rocks, and sand from one place and deposit them in another place, either in lakes or in the sea or on the land (which makes rich farmland). Rivers can form estuaries or deltas when they

slow down as they run into a sea or an ocean. A river rarely runs in a straight line because it hits many obstacles as it flows downhill.

An **estuary** occurs where a river meets the ocean or the sea. It is a broad area of water. At low tide, it is mostly freshwater; at high tide, it is saltier. Estuaries are muddy because the river has slowed and released sediment. This means estuaries have a lot of worms and shellfish living in them, attracting many birds. A delta is created when a river meets a sea or an ocean and slows down. As it slows, sediment may build up and form a delta. A **delta** is shaped roughly like a triangle and is named for the Greek letter that has a triangular shape. A **floodplain** is a wide, flat valley formed when a river overflows near its end or along riverbanks. When the floodwaters go back down, a floodplain is left behind as deposits of fine sediment, which create rich soil for farming.



Answer the Following

1. How do rivers shape the land? _____

2. Name two ways in which rivers can begin. _____
3. Why doesn't a river flow in a straight line? _____

4. How are estuaries and deltas alike? How are they different? _____

