

Irrigation

But no amount of clever earthworks will make crops grow if they don't get enough water. That's where irrigation comes in. To irrigate means to bring water from elsewhere to make sure that plants are able to grow. For lots of people around the world, it can be the difference between starving and surviving.

Many people believe irrigation to be one of the greatest farming achievements of all time.



Across the ancient world, people developed a variety of smart solutions to their water

problems. One way, used in what is now Iran and Iraq, was to dig ditches through dry land and divert some of the flow from a nearby river. In Egypt, they used to wait for the annual flooding of the Nile in a method known as basin irrigation. Across the Nile's flood plain, they built earth walls to hold back the waters long enough for the silt from the river to settle on the land.

Qanats

But what if the land you want to farm is a long way from your nearest river? Nearly three thousand years ago in the Middle East, they noticed that distant hills often held water far below the surface. To get to the water, they built a clever system of wells, tunnels and channels, called qanats, that directed the water to flow onto the parched land below.

Of course, these days we have modern methods involving large machines to help us farm and water the land. Still, that should take nothing away from the achievements of those who had to use muscle and brain power to keep the fields watered and fertile.



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LO: Comprehension

1. Look at the section: Irrigation.
According to the text, what does irrigation mean?
2. Why is irrigation so important?
3. Complete the sentence below:
In Iran and Iraq they used to...

Tick **one**

- divert the direction of some of the river to help them water the land.
- wait for the local river to flood and collect the water.
- build earth walls to hold back water from the Nile.
- gather silt to fertilise the land.

4. Look at the section: Qanats
How did they remove the water from the hills?
5. Using information from the text, put a tick in the correct box to show whether each statement is a **fact** or an **opinion**.

	Fact	Opinion
Farmers from the past are arguably some of the most skilled inventors and smart thinkers.		
Hill-dwellers developed terracing.		
Many people believe irrigation to be one of the greatest farming achievements of all time.		
These days we have modern pumps and pipes to aid irrigation.		

6. Consider the texts from yesterday and today.

Draw lines to match each section to its main content.

One has been done for you.

