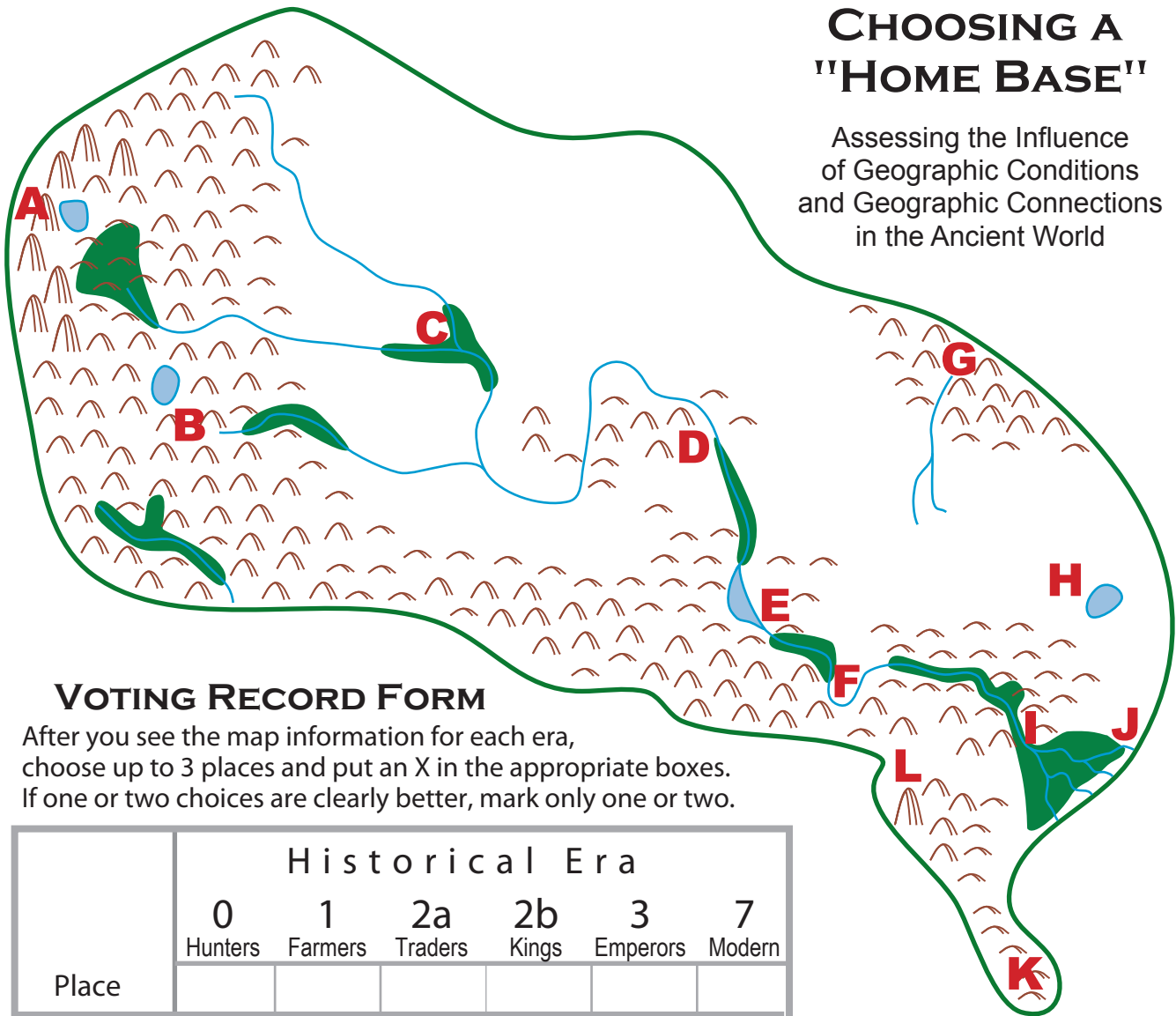


CHOOSING A "HOME BASE"

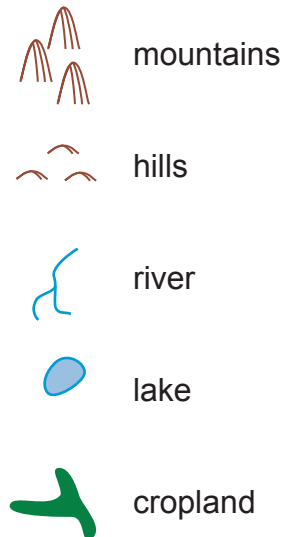
Assessing the Influence
of Geographic Conditions
and Geographic Connections
in the Ancient World



VOTING RECORD FORM

After you see the map information for each era,
choose up to 3 places and put an X in the appropriate boxes.
If one or two choices are clearly better, mark only one or two.

Place	Historical Era					
	0	1	2a	2b	3	7
	Hunters	Farmers	Traders	Kings	Emperors	Modern
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						
L						



GEOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS AND CONNECTIONS IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE

The 12 places in this simulation are all real places, each with a long and sometimes complicated history. The main “take-home message” for students is that different locations were considered important at different times in history, for reasons that reflect the technological development and economic and social conditions of each era:

Prehistory. During this time, humans lived primarily by hunting and gathering. They did best in places with mild climate and somewhat complex terrain (which can support a variety of plants and animals). Proximity to a lake or river added another potential source of food as well as water. If students see only a map of rainfall, they are likely to choose places A (Rift highlands), B (Ethiopia) and K (Canaan/Judea/Palestine) more frequently than other lettered places on the map. Knowledge of the locations of lakes and rivers may encourage votes for other locations – a teacher might caution students that a lake in a desert (place H) is likely to be salty (though this one was fresh back when the Sahara was rainier).

Era 1: Beginnings. During this era, people began to rely on agriculture, which was especially successful on river floodplains with soft and easy-to-work soil. Armed with a map that shows areas with fertile soil, students are likely to choose places C (at the junction of the White Nile and Blue Nile rivers) and I (at the head of the Nile Delta). Meanwhile, it is important to emphasize that the places occupied by hunters and gatherers (A, B, and K) could continue with that lifestyle, though their relative importance declined as farming regions gained population and wealth.

Era 2a: Traders. As population and wealth continued to grow, people invented better boats, wagons, and other technologies for transporting goods and people. Locations along trade routes became important; places near shallow rapids and waterfalls became especially important, because river traffic had to portage around the obstacles. Places near D (the gold mines of Nubia near the second cataract of the Nile) and E (Aswan, near the first cataract) had periods of considerable importance at various times during this era.

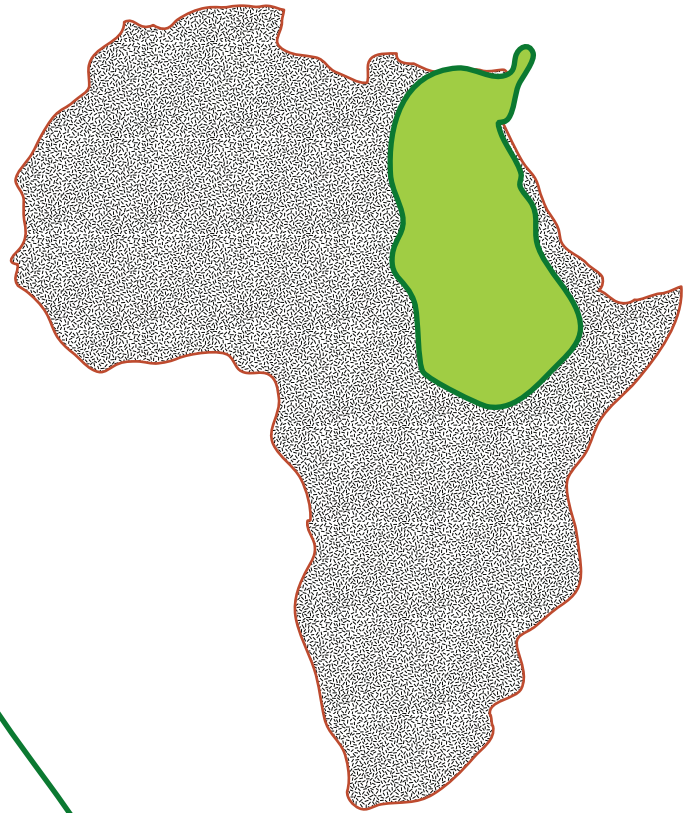
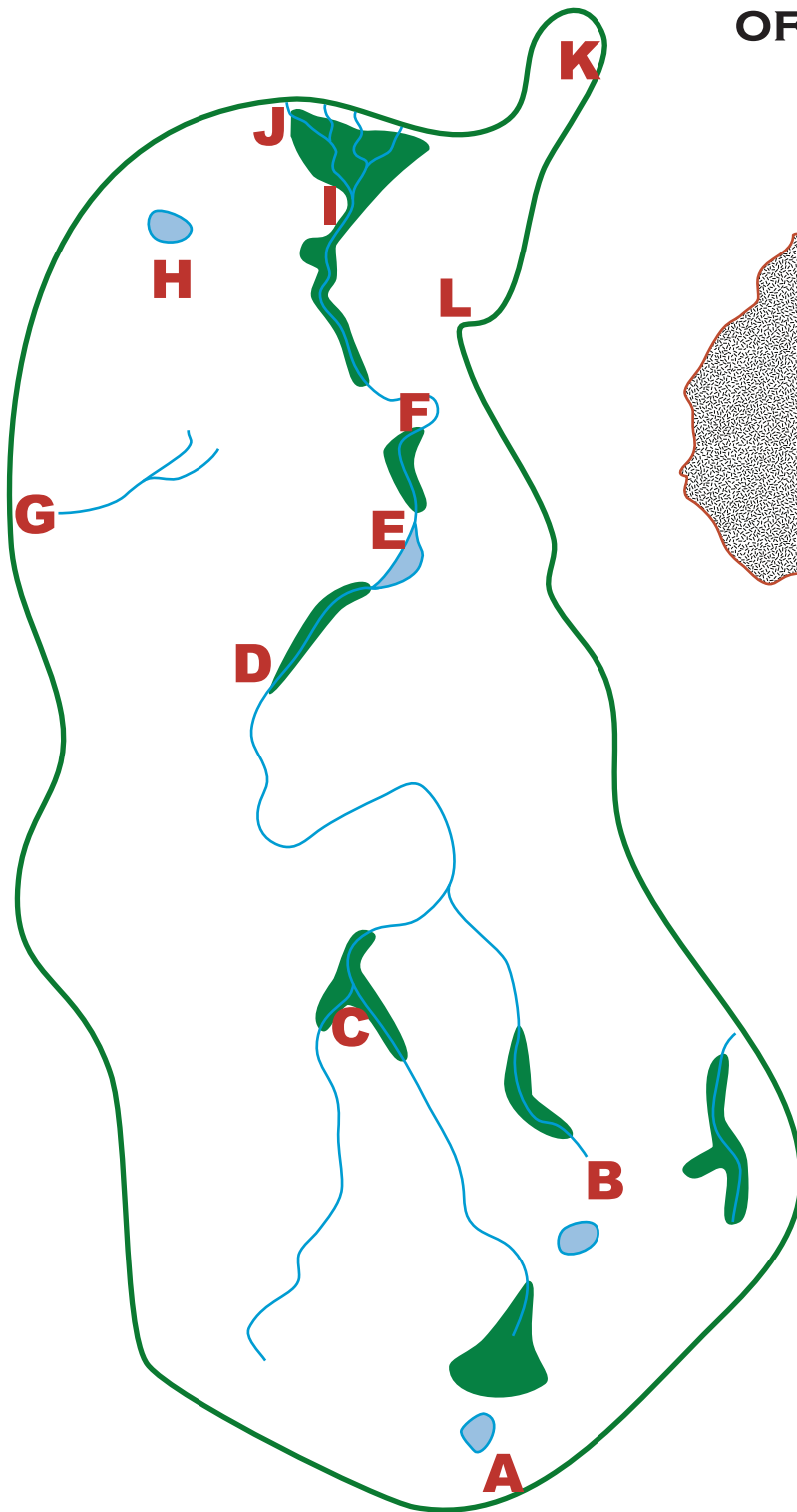
Era 2b: Early cities. In a dry climate, people must add water to the soil in order to be successful farmers. The result is a tremendous increase in food production per square mile of land. This allowed some people to choose other occupations, including education and government, which in turn aided agriculture by developing engineering and political infrastructures to support increasingly complex irrigation systems. Places I (Memphis/Giza) and F (Thebes/Karnak) were able to support rapid growth of urban populations – place C lagged behind, because it had less cropland and a more isolated location.

Era 3: Empires. The Nile Valley was a great place to start urban civilization, but growth was sharply limited by the relatively small amount of fertile soil and irrigation water in the valley. Control of a larger territory was hindered by distance across hostile climate and terrain. Places like Persia and Rome eventually became powerful empires that conquered Egypt and made it a colony. Place J (Alexandria) emerged as a center of colonial trade and government during Greek and Roman times – it is effectively on the border between agricultural Egypt and the trade-based empires around the Mediterranean Sea.

Later eras: When the British divided this region, places I and C became the capitals of newly independent Egypt and the Sudan – I (Cairo) across the river from Memphis, the Old Kingdom capital of Egypt, and C (Khartoum) near a regional capital of ancient Meroe.

MODERN NAMES OF ACTIVITY CHOICES

Assessing the Influence
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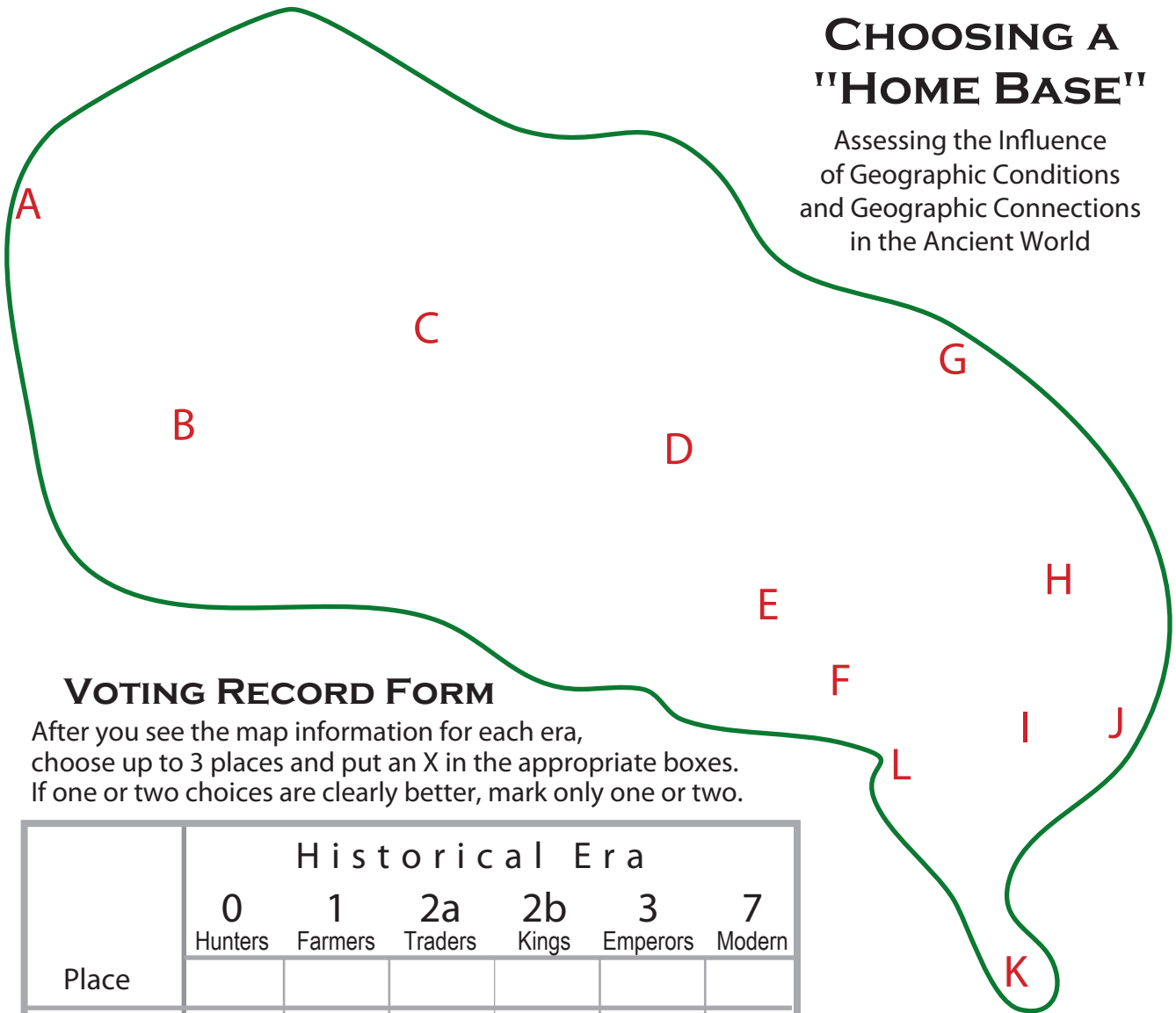
- A** Omo Valley hominid fossil site
- B** highlands of Ethiopia
- C** Khartoum, capital of Sudan
- D** Second cataract of the Nile
- E** Aswan falls, modern dam
- F** Thebes, Valley of the Kings
- G** Strategic oasis in Sahara
- H** Salt lake, formerly fresh
- I** Memphis, pyramids & sphinx
- J** Alexandria, Greek/Roman city
- K** Hills of Palestine/Judea
- L** Sinai, entrance to Gulf of Suez

Background on the choices in the Locating a Capital simulation

- A. Omo valley is one of the places where archaeologists have found fossil evidence of very early human settlement. Students often choose this site early in the simulation, because it has hills, lakes, and plenty of rain – in short, a good place for subsistence living by hunting and gathering.
- B. Highlands of Ethiopia are mentioned several times in the Bible. This area was occupied as long as the Nile Valley. It is remote and somewhat rugged, better for subsistence than for amassing great wealth and military power, although the capitals of several regional empires were located in this area at times when the Nile Valley was weak or divided.
- C. Khartoum is the capital of modern-day North Sudan. It has a strategic location at the junction of the two main branches of the Nile, with a modest amount of productive land nearby. As a result, it was always regionally important, but it was too far from the centers of population to be a real power.
- D. The Second Cataract is a major barrier to river travel, and therefore this place had some importance as a place to portage around the rapids and waterfalls. It had gold mines but little cropland, which made it a poor choice for even a regional capital throughout much of its history.
- E. The cataracts at Aswan were another barrier, but this area had more productive land and a higher population. In modern times, this is the site of one of the major hydroelectric dams in the world, which also diverts millions of gallons of water to irrigation projects on both sides of the Nile.
- F. Thebes (the Valley of the Kings) was well located for protection and local economic growth. At times, a capital in this area ruled the entire Nile Valley, but it could not really compete with any well-organized group that chose a more favorable location closer to the Mediterranean.
- G. On the blank map, this place looks really out of the way, and in fact it was until trans-Sahara caravans became important thousands of years after the first Egyptian kings. To caravaners, a stopping place with water in the middle of the desert was really important, even if it could not grow very large.
- H. This out-of-the-way place looks better on the first map – a place in the desert with a lake nearby. Desert lakes, however, tend to accumulate salt and become unusable for drinking or even irrigation. The particular lake was fresh many thousands of years ago, but was already salty in Egyptian times.
- I. Students are likely to choose this strategic location at the head of the Nile Delta during the eras of valley farming and river trade. Perhaps best known as Memphis, this was the capital of several powerful Egyptian kingdoms. Not surprisingly, it is also the site of the Sphinx and Great Pyramids. Interestingly, Memphis, Tennessee, has a similar position with respect to the Mississippi Delta – it is the last hilly area before the river enters the flat floodplain that stretches to the Gulf of Mexico.
- J. The site of Alexandria was out of the way, flood-prone, and unimportant during much of Egyptian history. It gained strategic significance when the Greek and Roman empires relied on merchant ships to carry food, wine, cloth, tools, and salt to and from ports all around the Mediterranean. Later, Alexandria became a center of learning and one of the ten largest cities in the world, although it was never the capital of a great empire.
- K. The hills of Judea/Palestine are often called part of the “Fertile Crescent.” Although the hilly land is rocky and not particularly fertile, it has more rain than many other places and therefore students may choose it as a good place to live in the early stages of the simulation. Later, of course, this area became a kind of battleground between many political entities – Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Persia, Rome, Byzantium, European Crusaders, the Ottoman Empire, and now Palestine/Israel.
- L. The tip of Sinai, by contrast, is a barren desert, of little importance to land-based powers. People trying to use the seas, however, call this a strategic location, a chokepoint along the route from the oilfields of Southwest Asia through the Suez Canal to the oil-hungry cities of Europe.

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