

FLOODS AND DROUGHT

STAGE 3

Water is a precious commodity. It is something that all living things need to survive. Yet it is also incredibly dangerous to us as humans. We need water to live but only in particular circumstances. Too much or too little can be equally lethal.



It isn't just the threat of drowning that makes water so dangerous. Too much water building up in one area can lead to flooding. Floods cause a significant number of problems. If farmland floods for long periods, it can ruin entire harvests and people may starve. Floods can also spread disease quickly. This is less of a problem now that we can move food around the world and have hospitals. It would have had dire consequences in the past.

Some cultures have used flooding to their benefit. The Ancient Egyptians used the annual floods of the River Nile to fertilise their farmland on the river banks. Others have struggled for centuries to fight the sometimes devastating impact. The Yangtze–Huai River floods in China in 1931 claimed somewhere between 1,000,000 and 4,000,000 deaths, the worst in its history.

Just as too much water can be deadly, so too can too little. A drought is a prolonged period of low rainfall that leads to a shortage of water. Just before the 1931 flood in China, there had been a drought for two years. The winter of 1930 was much colder than normal and saw a substantial amount of snowfall which melted and flooded the rivers.

Droughts can be disastrous on their own. They often combine with very high temperatures. These can lead to dehydration and leave plants struggling to survive. The land can become susceptible to fires once it dries out.

Australia experienced one of the worst droughts in its history in 2018. This followed two years of record-breaking temperatures. One of the largest wildfires in Australia's history raged for nearly four months the following year. It wasn't until rain fell heavily in February 2020 that it started to die down.

Human settlements can make flood and drought areas worse. Areas downstream may experience floods or be deprived of water if rivers are diverted or dammed. Climate change can also alter temperatures around the globe and affect rainfall.



VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word or phrase tells you that water is important?
2. What does the author mean when they say too much water can be **lethal**?
3. What are **dire consequences**?
4. Look at the sentence that begins “The winter of 1930”. Describe in your own words how much snow fell.
5. What impression do you get about a forest fire that **raged**?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

When were the worst floods in Chinese history?

S

How can flooding affect people?

S

Explain how the temperature can make droughts worse.

R

What becomes a bigger risk after a drought?

I

Explain why the people of China might have been surprised when the flood hit in 1931.

Answers:

1. Precious commodity
2. It can be deadly
3. Bad after effect, bad things happening because of it
4. Any sentence that explains that a lot of snow fell - look for understanding of the word **substantial**
5. It was angry and aggressive

R: 1931

S: It can ruin crops/harvests and people can starve. They can drown. It can spread disease.

S: High temperatures can make people and animals dehydrated

R: Fires

I: There had been a drought for two years before with very little water