Hwang Ho Journey

The Hwang Ho (Huang He), Yellow River, is one of the most extraordinary rivers of the world. An interesting raft traffic has journeyed on it for centuries and has provided the livelihood for many. Join us now; lash your simple framework of poles, fastened to hides or sheepskins, and launch your own journey on the “ungovernable waters.”

To help complete this arduous journey along this river, you must fill in the blanks below. In addition, when asked to do so, label the attached map with the names of the geographical places encountered.

The rafts embark in Spring as soon as the ice has cleared from the river, which is frozen from the end of ______________ to the beginnng of ______________.

The Hwang, Huang or Yellow River is also called ____________________, or ____________________, or ____________________.

The Huang He originates from Kar Qu Lake on the east side of the Dozigeya mountains, a branch of the __________ Range in Tibet (map). The river flows rapidly eastward and then north and after 1,000 miles reaches the vicinity of the modern city of Lanzhou, also spelled Lanchou (map). Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province, lies on the Yellow River, in the Longxi basin. As the river's journey continues, the Great Wall (map) is encountered.

The raft journey includes Lanchow, Hsiashuitsu, perched on a rocky cliff, Chungwei or Zhongwei (map) where raftsmen navigate through rapid after rapid. Chinese literature confirms the fact that here the earlier Sons of Han 2,000 years ago were using sheepskin and oxhide rafts identical with those you are using for your journey. From this another name, Scourge of the Sons of Han, has appeared as a river legacy.
After Chungwei the course widens as it enters the __________ Desert (map), and except for the passage through the fertile district around Ningsia, becomes a monotonous passage through desolate yellow wastes all the way to Paotow, also spelled Baotow (map).

Paotow is the raft journey’s end, but the river continues. At Paotow, when all of the cargoes have been turned over to the wool and hide merchants, the rafts are taken apart and the hides folded up and packed on donkeys or camels for the long journey home by ___________. The rafts can be managed with comparative ease as they float downstream, but their great resistance and their clumsiness make it practically impossible for them to be poled upstream, even in quiet water. They are taken apart at the end of the voyage and the skins are carried back overland to the place of departure.

The raft journey has ended, but the river continues, eventually completing a 2,500-mile journey. At the top of the Great Loop the river shifts direction abruptly and begins to flow south. Starting from Togtoh (map) in Inner Mongolia the river enters the yellow earth region. By then the river with its steep gradients, has cut its way down to the western Loess Plateau (map), a drop of some 10,000 feet. Once on the plateau, the river broadens, meanders, and becomes shallow. It then turns almost due ___________ and within a short distance drops sharply off the Loess Plateau and enters the ___________ Plain near the city of Luoyang (Loyang).

This is the point where loss of water and soil erosion pose a serious problem, making the Yellow River greatest in the world in silt content and the amount of silt it discharges.

On this descent, its capacity to carry silt increases. Rainfall also increases, and more water enters the Huang He, bringing quantities of silt from the tributary network also. Here and in the Wei Valley, whose tributary waters are gathered unto the Hwang west of Lanchow, was the cradle of the Chinese race, but the loess (yellow sediment) has blown and submerged numerous cities.
The lower reaches of the river begin at Mengjin, in the Henan province (map). Hereafter, the large quantity of silt flushed down by the river is silted up on the plain. It carries masses of silt from the loess plains which are deposited on the river bed, causing the water to overflow the banks. This ________ (color) loess, carried in suspension in the water, has given the river and the Yellow Sea their names. When the rain falls in late summer and early autumn tremendous amounts of water pour down from the upper reaches. In the past, water would burst through the dykes downstream and sweep across the countryside, inundating thousands of square miles and causing frightful devastation and loss of life.

Most rivers overflow, but the floods of the Huang He are spectacular. The floods are monumental and the results are catastrophic. For example, in 1938 the Chinese Nationalist government destroyed the dikes on the south side of the river in an effort to slow the advance of the invading ____________ army. Six million acres were lost and 6 million people had to be relocated, with as many as 500,000 dead.

In recent years, ________ have been built along the course of the river to prevent serious flooding on the plains. Consequently the peasants along the riverbank have had to build the dikes higher and higher each century. As a result, part of the river flows along an elevated channel which is often as much as 1 1/2 km wide and sometimes more than seven metres high.

Today, the Hwang Ho empties into the Yellow Sea (map) north of the ______________ Peninsula (map). The mouth of the river has moved by as much as 500 miles. Until 602 B.C. it flowed through the northern city of Tientsin or Tianjin (map) but then shifted southward into the Shandong.