The countries making up the Nile river basin show the influence of cultures from around the world. For centuries, trade networks brought goods from other continents through the Horn of Africa to the center of the great continent. The 16th century brought European colonial influence, and in the 19th century Arab nations controlled parts of the area.

Today, traditional African music that incorporates historical influences as well as modern popular music styles is still performed and taught throughout the region. The Nile Project musicians reflect influences from the several cultures and musical idioms.

The Nile Project musicians make music to bring people together in order to take care of the Nile River and to share its water in good ways.

Adapted from the Hopkins Center Outreach and Arts Education, Dartmouth College.
What Makes Up a River Basin?

Let’s identify the features of the Nile River and the Susquehanna River basins. What do they have in common? What is different?

### A river basin
A river basin is all the land that drains its waterways into a river and its tributaries. It includes all the streams and creeks that eventually flow into one river.

The Nile River Basin is in Africa and consists of eleven countries: Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Burundi.

The Susquehanna River is Basin is only in one country, the United State of America and goes across the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.¹

### Tributaries
Tributaries are all the rivers and streams that flow into a river.

The Susquehanna River has two major tributaries: the North Branch, and the West Branch. The Susquehanna drains 27,500 square miles, about 50% of Pennsylvania.

The Nile’s two main tributaries are the White Nile and the Blue Nile. The Atbara is the last (or farthest downstream) tributary to contribute to the Nile system. The Nile drains 1,293,000 square miles, or about 10% of all of Africa.²

### Headwaters
Headwaters are the beginning of a river. They might be a marshy pond, thousands of tiny streams flowing together or an underground spring.

The Susquehanna River begins when the North Branch from New York and the West Branch from Western Pennsylvania meet and flow south towards Maryland.

Many people believe Lake Victoria, Africa’s biggest lake, is the source of the Nile. Others say the tributaries flowing into Lake Victoria, such as the Kagera River, and the Ruvubu River, form the true source of the Nile.³

The land alongside the river is called a riverbank. Many plants and animal make their homes along the riverbank due to the constant source of water and replenishment of nutrients during a flood. The vegetation growing along a riverbank provides homes for wildlife, protection from erosion and a way of filtering pollution from run-off.

The Nile River is home to over 100 species of birds, crocodiles, hippopotami and baboons, and other animals. The Susquehanna River holds trout, ducks and many other species of waterfowl, fish, and insects, as well as various birds and animals that drink or feed at the waters.⁴

Adapted from the Hopkins Center Outreach and Arts Education, Dartmouth College.
Flow describes the water moving through a river. The amount of water in a river and the speed at which it travels affect the flow. Discharge refers to the volume of water flowing through a river per unit of time. The average discharge of Susquehanna River is 40,080 cubic feet per second. The average discharge of the Nile is 99,941 cubic feet per second.5

The mouth of the river, or delta, is the end of a river where it meets the ocean or other body of water. The water spreads out and slows down, spreading the sediment that it has brought from upstream. River deltas tend to have rich, fertile soil because of all this sediment. The Nile has one of the world’s largest river deltas, covering 150 miles of the Mediterranean coastline.

Rivers are more than just water, rocks and bridges. Rivers bring people together and have since the beginning of human civilization. Around the world and throughout history, cultures have developed around rivers. The name Susquehanna comes from the Len’api word Sisa’we’hak’hanna, meaning Oyster river, named for abundant oyster beds. The name Nile comes from the Greek “neilos,” which means valley. The ancient Egyptians called the river Ar or Aur, which means black, for the black sediment left behind after floods.7

Floodplains are the low, flat plains along the sides of river that flood when the water level is high. Floodplains are important because they absorb extra water in a flood. Without them, the excess water flows downstream, causing damage to property along the river banks. Susquehanna River floods on average only once every fifteen years. The last flood was in 2004. Ancient Egyptian civilization would never have thrived the way it did without the floods of the Nile, caused by heavy summer rains in Ethiopia.6

Dams are barriers that block a river’s flow, built to retain water in a certain area or manage when water flows into a certain region. The benefits—electricity, distribution of water, harm reduction from floods—must be balanced with the damaging effects—preventing fish migration, imbalanced water management and danger from dam failure. Susquehanna River has twenty one dams running from New York, across Pennsylvania, and into Maryland. Dams prevent fish and other river-dwelling species from travelling up and downstream.

The countries of the Nile have fought for control of the water resources for generations. In 1970, the construction of the Aswan High Dam allowed Egyptians more control over the annual summer floods. In 2010 Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania signed an agreement to share water, while Sudan and Egypt strongly disagreed.8

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Adapted from the Hopkins Center Outreach and Arts Education, Dartmouth College.
1 PA Academic Standards for Civics and Government 5.4.3.A: Identify how customs and traditions influence government;
2 PA Academic Standards for Geography 7.1.6.A Describe geographic tools and their uses
3 PA Academic Standards for Geography 7.2.3.A: Identify the physical characteristic of places and regions.
4 PA Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology 4.1.7.B: Understand the role of the watershed.
5 In accordance with PA Academic Standards for Geography 7.2.6.A: Describe the physical characteristics of places and regions.
6 PA Academic Standards for Geography 7.4.6.A: Describe the impacts of physical system on people.
7 PA Academic Standards for Geography 7.4.3.A Identify the impacts of physical systems on people.
8 PA Academic Standards for Geography 7.4.12.B: Analyze the impacts of people on physical systems.

Adapted from the Hopkins Center Outreach and Arts Education, Dartmouth College.
Draw the Nile River

Map of Africa

Atlantic Ocean

Mediterranean Sea

Cairo

Lake Victoria

Indian Ocean
Draw the Susquehanna River