

RIVER FLOODS

Fighting floods in China

During the summer of 1998, people in China fought to stop their rivers from flooding. A flood is when water from a river flows over the land. The river Yangtze was one of the biggest rivers that flooded. Farmers and soldiers tried to make the river banks stronger and higher with stones and sandbags.

They were successful in some places. In others, the rivers either burst through their banks or flowed over the top. Once this happened, there was nothing to stop the water from spreading across the flat valley bottoms where people had their homes and farms.

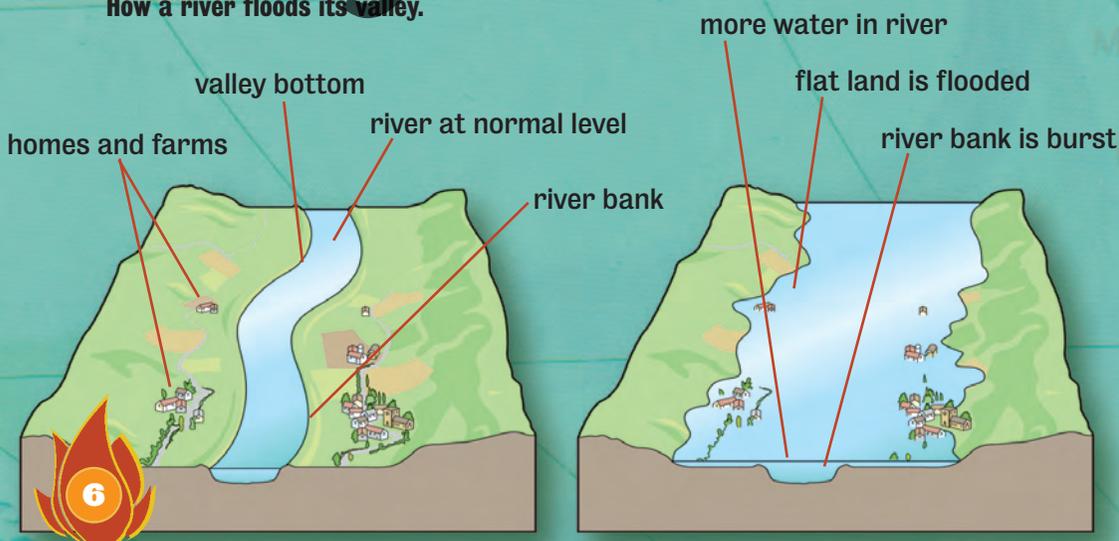
What caused the disaster?

The main reason for the floods was that there was more rain than usual. At first, most of the rain sank into the ground. After more rain, the ground became so wet that no more rain could sink into it. It continued to rain.

Next, the rainwater began to flow quickly off the ground and into the rivers. Before long, the rivers were so full that they began to overflow and flood.

Sometimes there is more than one reason for a flood. If mountain snow and ice melt in spring, at the same time as there is heavy rain, streams can quickly become raging torrents. The extra water then flows down to the lowland rivers. When this happens, people need to watch out for floods.

How a river floods its valley.





THE 1998 RIVER FLOODS IN CHINA

- About 2600 people were killed during the floods.
- At least twenty million homes were washed away.
- One city was saved from flooding by blowing up the banks with dynamite and flooding farmland instead.
- The last bad floods in China were in 1954, when 30 000 people died.

People made homeless by the floods in China.