

Where places are found

There are many reasons why settlements should grow up at certain places. Often, a place will have more than one reason.

Q1. Look carefully at the reasons for siting a place shown on the diagram below. Then think of the school where you live. First, cross through all those which could not apply (for example, if you don't live by the coast, your place cannot be a port).

Q2. You are now left with a range of possibilities. Look at a map of your local area and see which ones seem likely. Circle those which do not seem likely.

Q3. You have now got some suggestions as to what may be one or more reasons for the siting of your city, town or village back in the distant past before it grew to its present size. Write a sentence to summarise where your settlement is in the landscape.

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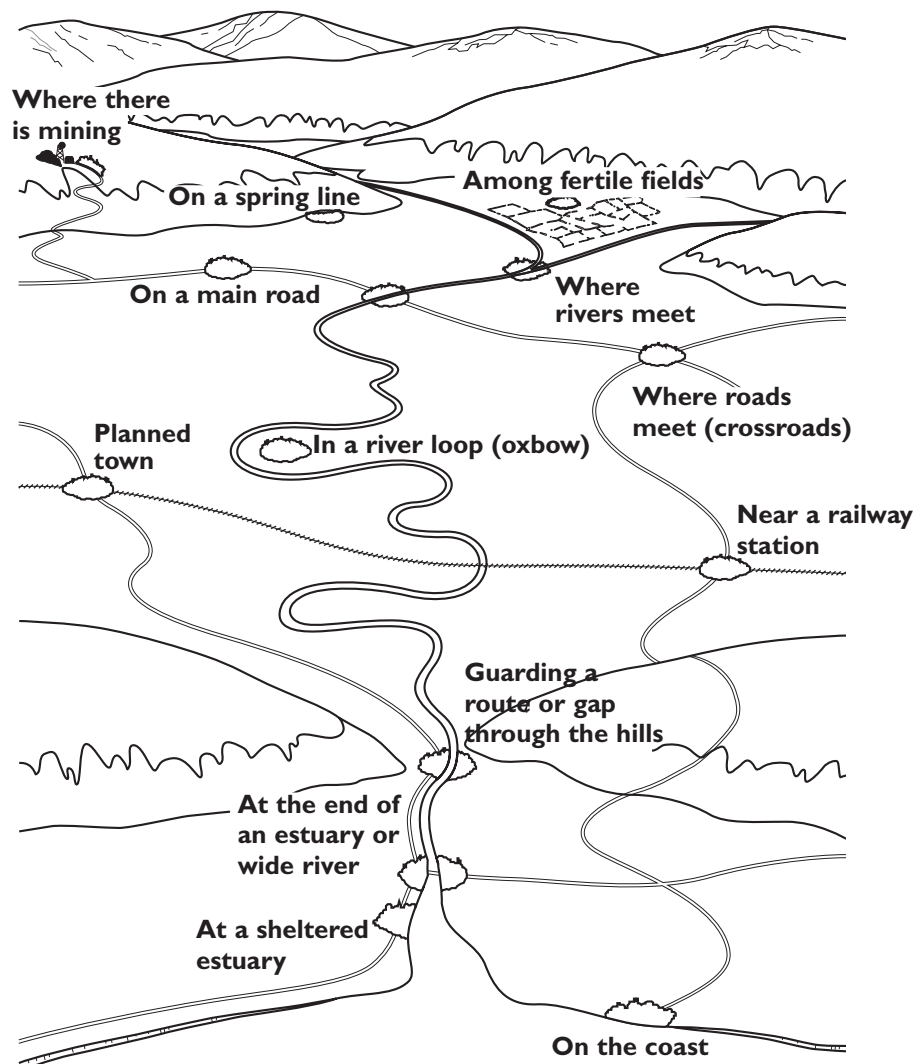
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Background

There are, of course, several reasons for siting. One is purely physical, such as the convenience of a river crossing. This is what is emphasised here. But there are also historical reasons and economic ones, too. They are less easy to set out as questions, but would be worth bringing out in discussion. For example, many market towns were speculative ventures by local landowners about a millennium ago. Many did not work out because of competition between neighbours for scarce customers. The same competition works today. At A level this idea would be called Christaller's Central Place Theory, but even at a simple level students will be aware that human competition is an important factor. It is good to bring this in at an early stage.

One way to do this is to find someone who was important to your place. Very often, important people are entrepreneurs and they obviously have influence, so they could have been responsible for trade moving to where they wanted rather than to somewhere else. The same happens today. A number of places might want a big company to set up its factory or offices in their place, but, other things being equal, it will be personal factors which eventually decide who will forge ahead and who will be ignored. Thus the Midland Valley of Scotland, the North East of England, Northern Ireland and South Wales often find themselves in direct competition for inward investment.

Answers

Q1. This will depend on your location. Notice that the question asks students to eliminate answers which are clearly wrong, rather than ring those that might be right. This is an excellent way of reducing choices from a complex pattern, and focuses students on a smaller and smaller range from which they can finally use other resources (a map or atlas) to look for positive suggestions.