

FROM "HYMN TO THE NILE" C. 2300 B.C.

Hail to thee, O Nile!
Who manifests thyself over this land
And comes to give life to Egypt!
Mysterious is thy issuing forth from the darkness
On this day whereon it is celebrated!
Watering the orchards created by Ra
To cause all the cattle to live
You give the earth to drink, inexhaustible one!
Path that descends from the sky
Loving the bread of Seb and the first-fruits of Nepera
You cause the workshops of Ptah to prosper!

Lord of the fish, during the inundation
No bird alights on the crops.
You create the grain
You bring forth the barley
Assuring perpetuity to the temples.
If you cease your toil and your work
Then all that exists is in anguish.
If the gods suffer in heaven
Then the faces of men waste away....

He is the creator of all good things
As master of energy, full of sweetness in his choice....
He is not sculptured in stone
In the statutes crowned with the uraeus serpent.
He cannot be contemplated.
No servitors has He, no bearers of offerings!
He is not enticed by incantations!
None knows the place where He dwells.
None discovers his retreat by the power of a written spell....

Come and prosper! Come and prosper!
O Nile, come and prosper!
O you who make men to live through his flocks
And his flocks through his orchards!
Come and prosper, come, O Nile, come and prosper!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can you tell that the Egyptians viewed the Nile as a deity?
2. Why do you think the Egyptians placed such importance on the Nile River?
3. What are some examples of personification in the hymn?
4. Try to define the underlined words in the poem *without* using a dictionary or electronic device.
5. Below is a citation that a person might include at the end of a research paper if he or she had referenced the poem in their paper. Based on the information you see in the citation, what type of information is included when citing a source?

Source: Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. I: The Ancient World, pp. 79-83.