RUINSCAPE LESSON SHEET

Pont du Gard

On land | France | about 40-60 CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____ **Date** _____

The Pont du Gard is a Roman bridge built to carry water, not people, and it has no cement holding its biggest stones.

Read the story

Around 40 to 60 CE, the Romans built an aqueduct about 50 kilometers long to carry spring water to the city of Nemausus, today's Nimes. Most of it ran underground or along the ground, but to cross the Gardon River valley, engineers built the Pont du Gard.

It has three levels of arches. The water flowed in a channel on top. The whole aqueduct dropped only about 12 meters over its entire length, so the water flowed gently downhill the whole way. That took amazing measuring skills.

The big stones of the lower levels fit together without mortar. Some weigh about 6 tonnes. Workers lifted them with wooden cranes powered by people walking inside big treadwheels.

How it ended

Over hundreds of years, minerals in the water built up a stony crust inside the channel. Without care, the aqueduct clogged, and by about the 500s CE it stopped carrying water. People later used the bridge to cross the river.

Key words

- aqueduct: a channel or bridge built to carry water over long distances
- mortar: a paste that sticks stones or bricks together
- engineer: a person who designs and builds machines, structures or systems

Wow facts

- The water dropped only about 2.5 centimeters over the length of the bridge itself.
- The biggest blocks weigh about 6 tonnes and fit without mortar.
- Workers' marks, like numbers, are still carved on some stones.

Talk about it

1. How could Romans make water flow 50 kilometers using only gravity?

2. What happens when people stop taking care of important structures?

Try this

Draw a map of Pont du Gard as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. **What did the Pont du Gard carry?**
   - **A.** Water
   - **B.** Cars
   - **C.** Trains
   - **D.** Ships
2. **How did Romans lift huge stones?**
   - **A.** Treadwheel cranes
   - **B.** Helicopters
   - **C.** Elephants only
   - **D.** Magic
3. **Why did the aqueduct stop working?**
   - **A.** Mineral crust clogged it
   - **B.** It was hit by lightning
   - **C.** It froze
   - **D.** A dragon

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/pont-du-gard/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. It is part of an aqueduct that carried water to Nimes.
2. A. Workers walked inside big wheels to power wooden cranes.
3. A. Minerals built up inside and it was no longer cleaned.