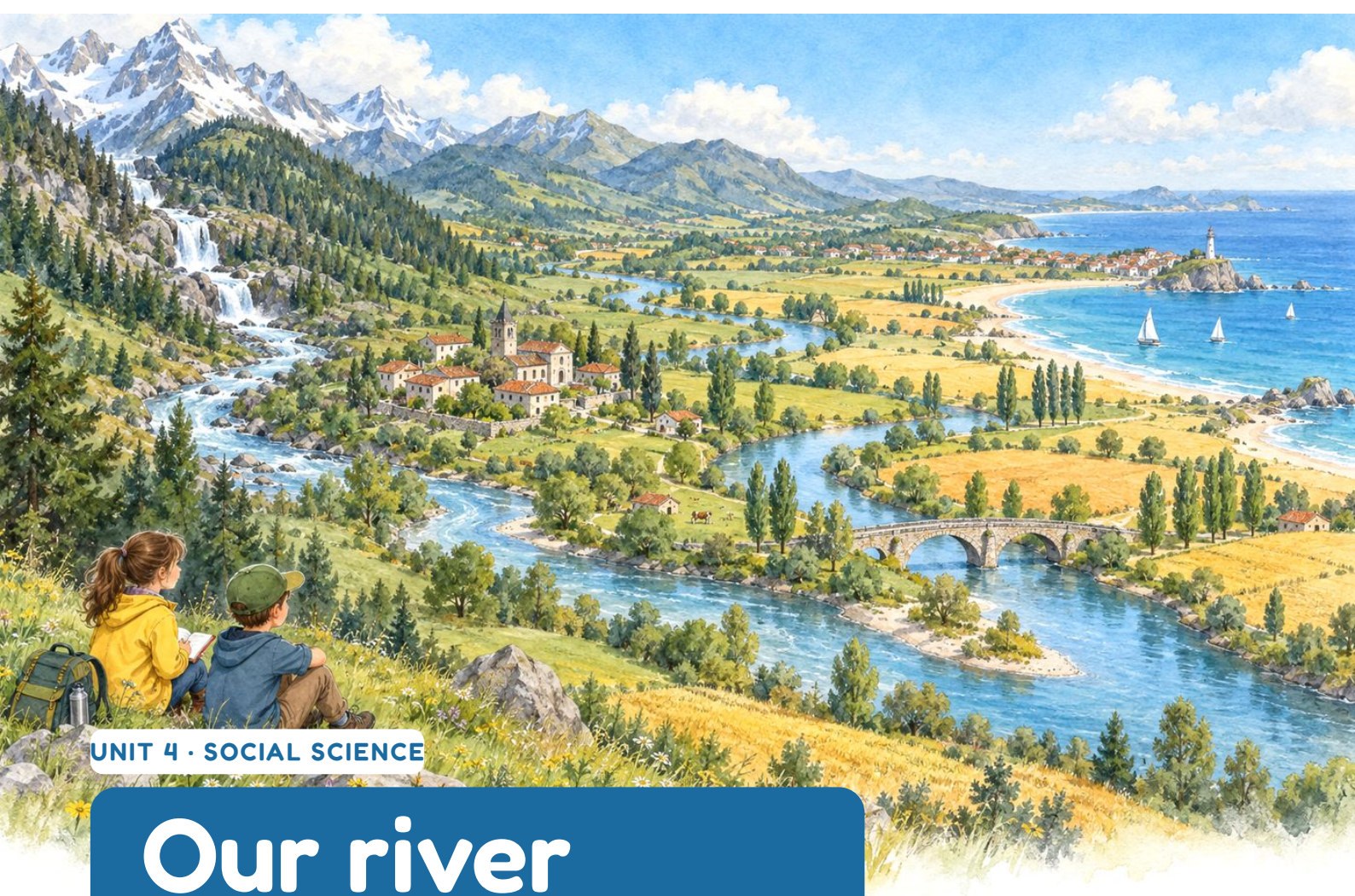




UNIT 4 · SOCIAL SCIENCE

Our river

Every town you know stands near water. This unit follows one river, the Aldara, from the snow where it starts to the sea where it ends. You will find out where a river is born, how it changes on its way down, and how the people of Fontalba, Molinar and Aldamar live beside it.

You will learn

- How a spring becomes a stream, and a stream becomes a river.
- What the upper, middle and lower course of a river are.
- How people use river water, and how to look after it.

In this unit

A A river from the mountains to the sea

- 1 Where a river is born 4
- From spring to stream 4
- 2 From the mountains to the sea 6

B People and the river

- 3 People and the river 8
- Looking after the river 8



The River Aldara from its spring to the sea. The map is on pages 6 and 7.

What do you know about rivers?

Before you start, think about the rivers you have seen. Write your ideas on the lines. At the end of the unit, come back to them and see what has changed.

Think 1

Where do you think a river starts?

Think 2

What do people use a river for?

Think 3

Which animals and plants live in or beside a river?

1 Where a river is born

Rain and snow fall on the mountains. Some of the water runs down the slopes and some soaks into the ground. Underground it moves slowly, until it meets rock it cannot cross. Then it comes out into the open. A place where water comes out of the ground is called a **spring**.

A spring gives only a trickle. The trickle runs downhill and meets other trickles, and together they make a **stream**. On a steep slope a stream runs fast. It rolls pebbles along and wears them smooth. When streams meet, they make a bigger one. The River Aldara begins like this, in the snow of the White Range, 1,850 metres above the sea.

From spring to stream



A spring. The water has been underground for months.



A stream, steep and fast, with pebbles worn smooth.



A waterfall, where the stream drops over a step of rock.

Try it

Hold a wet sponge over a tray and squeeze it gently. Where does the water come out? Watch how it drips and then runs. That is how a spring feeds a stream.

Did you know?

At its spring, the Aldara is a trickle you could step over. After 94 kilometres it is as wide as a football pitch is long.

Words to learn

Spring: a place where water comes out of the ground.

Stream: a small river that runs fast down a slope.

Tributary: a stream that flows into a bigger river.

Bank: the land along the side of a river.

Activities

1. Look at the three pictures. Which one shows a spring? How can you tell?
2. Why does a stream run faster in the mountains than in the valley?
3. Which of the four words in the box can you see in the pictures?

2 From the mountains to the sea



The River Aldara is 94 kilometres long. It starts in the White Range, crosses a valley and a plain, and reaches the sea at Aldamar.

Geographers split a river into three parts. Each part is called a **course**, and each one looks different.

Look at the map

Follow the river with your finger from the spring to the sea. Which town is nearest to the sea?



Upper course

The slope is steep. The water is cold, clear and fast, and it cuts into the rock. Fontalba stands here.

Middle course

The valley is wider and the river slows down. Farmers water their fields, and Molinar grew around a bridge and a mill.

Lower course

The land is almost flat. The river is wide and slow, and it bends in great loops. At Aldamar it flows into the sea.

3 People and the river

People have always settled near rivers. They need water to drink, to wash and to grow food. A river also gives fish, a road for boats and the push that turns a wheel.

A river stays clean only if we keep it clean. Rubbish, oil and dirty water make the river sick, and the fish and plants that live in it suffer. Everything that goes down a drain or a street ends up in a river or in the sea.

Looking after the river

We look after our river

- We put rubbish in the bin, never in the water.
- We use water carefully and turn off the tap.
- We keep to the paths and leave plants and animals alone.
- We help to clean the bank when the school organises it.



Your turn

1. Draw a poster with three rules to keep our river clean.
2. Ask at home: where does the water from your tap come from?

1 · Water for the fields

In the middle course, farmers open small canals so the river water runs between the rows. Without it, tomatoes and lettuces would not grow in summer. A single canal can carry water for many kilometres.



2 · Mills

Long ago the falling water turned the wheel of the mill at Molinar. The wheel moved the stones that ground wheat into flour for the whole valley. Today the old mill is a small museum.



3 · Sport and play

Now the calm lower course is a place for canoes. On summer mornings children from Aldamar learn to paddle with a monitor, and everyone wears a life jacket.

