The **Huang He** (Yellow River in translation) is the second-longest river in China and the sixth-longest in the world, with an estimated length of 3,395 miles. The Huang He’s length has changed over the years because the delta on the Bohai Sea has wandered up and down several hundred miles of coastline over the past two thousand years.

At various points in time, the accumulation of silt has raised the water level above surrounding land. “China’s Sorrow,” “Yellow Fear”, and “Scourge of the Sons of Han” all refer to the many floods that have plagued the people along the lower reaches of the Huang He. A high silt load from the Loess Plateau, a low gradient across the plain, and excessive precipitation have all contributed to disastrous flooding in the past and present.

**Definitions**

An arid area or desert receives less than 10 inches of rain a year.
A semi-arid area generally receives between 10 and 20 inches of rain per year.
Loess is a fine silt material carried by wind, probably originating from the Gobi Desert.