



Old Man River: Getting to Know the Father of Waters

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Grade: 7

North America Cluster: What can we learn from maps about settlement patterns in North America?

I. Location and Physical Characteristics

Lesson One: Where is it?

Preassessment:

Discussion. Students will describe where they "see" the Mississippi River on their mental map. Next they are to list as many places found along the Mississippi as they can.

Investigation:

Students will check the accuracy of their mental maps using desk maps.

- Trace the length of the Mississippi River.
- Circle the names of the states which border the river.
- Refer back to our preassessment list - how accurate were we?

Confirmation:

Students will continue to "explore" the river by underlining the names of river cities and any interesting physical features or landmarks.

Application:

Students create a model of the Mississippi River identifying the places that border its banks.

Extensions:

Students can expand their knowledge by using the Small Blue Planet CD-ROM to view satellite images of the river region. Laser clips and/or video clips may be shown to identify various places along the Mississippi. The teacher may want to read aloud "A Trip Down the "Great River" from The Mississippi by Corinne J. Naden, 1974, pages 1-11. This book is from America's Great River System series. Students could identify places on a blank map as the excerpt is read.

Lesson Two: Anatomy of a River

Preassessment:

Students will be divided into small groups of three or four. Each group will be given a copy of "Anatomy of a River" (from Understanding Our World through Geography by Jerry Aten ISBN 0-86653-592-6, page 97) and asked to identify the physical features related to rivers.(ie, source, mouth, etc.)

Investigation:

Student groups will exchange their "Anatomy of a River" worksheets and use available resources to check each others' papers.

Confirmation:

As a class, students will discuss their answers and make sure all teams have the correct responses. Students will be given an extended vocabulary list, "River Rhetoric" (see handout). Students can use United States, People and Places, a kit by Nystrom to find examples of the expanded vocabulary list.

Application and Assessment:

Each student will use the Mississippi model they created in Lesson One. They will locate as many of the physical features from their extended vocabulary as possible on this model. Students should write a descriptive paragraph of their model using at least 10 of their river terms.

Extensions:

Using HyperStudio or Linkway, students will create an electronic flashcard set. Students can design a river by building a sloping hill out of damp sand, pebbles and mud. They can then slowly pour a steady stream of water over the top of the mountain. They then watch carefully to see how the water finds the quickest way down the slope and how much sand and gravel it carries. Read *Where the River Begins* by Thomas Locker.

II. Settlement and Transportation

1. Life on the Mississippi
 - Native Americans
 - Westward Expansion
2. Evolution of River Transportation (including folklore and Mark Twain lit)
3. Development of Cities

III. Human-Environment Interaction

1. Floods
2. Pollution
3. Drinking Water

River Rhetoric

- bank
- basin
- bayous
- bluffs
- breakwater
- channel
- current
- dam

- erosion
- flood control
- headwaters
- levee
- lock
- lore
- meander
- melt-water
- oxbow
- lake
- reservoir

- rip-rap
- sandbar
- sediments
- silt
- slough
- spit
- stream
- swamp
- waterfall
- watershed



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