

Cobblestone™

THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

Use the articles, lessons, and activities in this teacher guide to help students understand the history, culture, and importance of the Mississippi River.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

How has the Mississippi River affected the history, culture, and trade of the United States?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the different cultures and peoples who have lived near the Mississippi River.
- Students will learn about the innovations that helped foster trade along the river.
- Students will learn about flooding disasters along the Mississippi River and how people attempt to control them.
- Students will compare and contrast cultures over time.
- Students will create a timeline of a chronological sequence of events.
- Students will analyze the effects of natural disasters on the Mississippi River.
- Students will create a map depicting settlements along the Mississippi River.
- Students will design and explain an invention that would simplify trade or travel.
- Students will research new flood-control measures.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core Social Studies skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

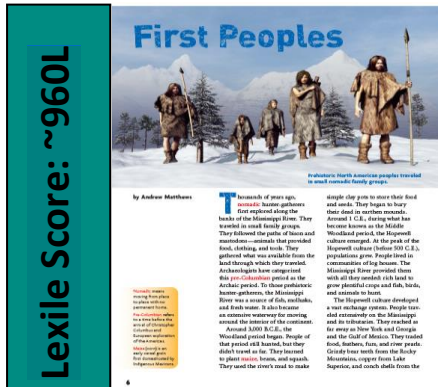
SELECTIONS

- **First Peoples**
Expository Nonfiction, ~960L
- **Engineer Extraordinaire**
Expository Nonfiction, ~980L
- **Controlling the River**
Expository Nonfiction, ~920L

First Peoples

pp. 6–8, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about the first people who lived near the river to explore how cultures near the Mississippi River changed over time.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the different cultures and peoples who have lived near the Mississippi River.
- Students will compare and contrast cultures over time.
- Students will create a map depicting settlements along the Mississippi River.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **conch** (p. 6) a sea creature with a distinctive, spiral-shaped shell
- **indigenous** (p. 8) the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else
- **cultivate** (p. 8) to prepare and work on land in order to raise crops

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How has the Mississippi River affected the history, culture, and trade of the United States?

Ask students if they know anything about the history of the place where they live. Does their town or city have a long history of people living there? Have there been different groups of people there over time (such as immigrants, early settlers, or recent newcomers)? Discuss how the different groups of people living in a place over time might change that region or the culture there.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then arrange students in small groups and have them create a word search puzzle using at least ten words, including the vocabulary words. Have groups exchange puzzles and complete each other's word search.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. What were two reasons why the earliest hunter-gatherers were drawn to the river?
2. How did the river make it possible for the Hopewell culture to trade with other groups?
3. Why did the Mississippian culture disappear over the course of the 1600s?
4. How did the arrival of the first European travelers affect the lives of the indigenous peoples of the Mississippi River?
5. How are the indigenous people today trying to reclaim their history?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Compare and Contrast

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes the history of people living along the Mississippi River. Over time, the cultures and lifestyles of people along the river changed and developed. However, these cultures changed forever with the arrival of the European settlers.

ASSESS: Working in small groups, have students identify main characteristics of the different cultures that lived along the Mississippi. Have students create a list of characteristics for each group, and then compare similarities and differences. Then have students compare their lists with the rest of the class and discuss any differences.

EXTEND

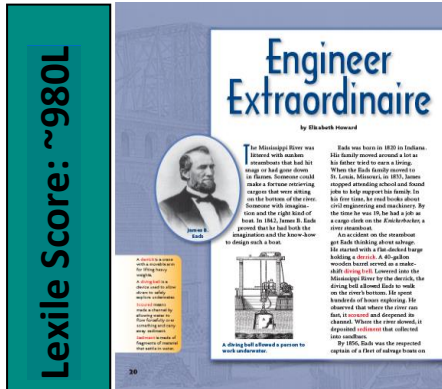
Social Studies: Invite students to use print and digital sources to create a map showing the territories and settlements of the Woodland culture, the Hopewell culture, and the Mississippian culture.

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Engineer Extraordinaire

pp. 20–23, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about James B. Eads to explore how technology and innovation affected trade along the Mississippi River.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the innovations that helped foster trade along the river.
- Students will create a timeline of a chronological sequence of events.
- Students will design and explain a new invention that would simplify trade or travel.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **salvage (p. 20)** cargo or goods retrieved from a shipwreck or other disaster
- **ironclad (p. 21)** a type of 19th-century warship protected with metal plates
- **navigate (p. 22)** to find the best route for a ship to travel over a stretch of water

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How has the Mississippi River affected the history, culture, and trade of the United States?

Ask students to think of a modern invention or technology that has made traveling easier or better (such as self-driving cars, GPS, and radar). Can they explain what part of travel was made easier by these inventions? Then introduce James B. Eads and how he was someone with good ideas and inventions that improved trade along the Mississippi River and throughout the country as a result.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Define each word with students. Then have each student create a small illustration for each word (or something related to the word). Finally, tell students to look for these words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students read the article. Then use these questions for discussion:

1. Describe the early life of James B. Eads.
2. What made James Eads first think about salvaging lost cargoes?
3. Why did the government ask Eads to build ironclad ships?
4. Why was Eads's new bridge design "boldly innovative"?
5. How did Eads force the Mississippi River to flow faster?
6. What particular goal did all of Eads inventions have in common?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Sequence of Events

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes the sequence of events from Eads's work on the Mississippi River and what else that work led him to do. Eads was able to take his ideas and then adapt them for other uses, not only helping trade along the river, but also creating inventions that would help in other locations.

ASSESS: Working in pairs, have students create a timeline year by year of Eads's work, starting with his early life through his death and election to the Hall of Fame of Great Americans.

EXTEND

Science: Invite students to imagine a new invention that would make trade or travel easier than it is now. Then have them create a diagram or drawing of that invention, with a brief description of what it does.

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Controlling the River

pp. 28–30, Expository Nonfiction

Use this article about flooding along the Mississippi River to explore the effects of flooding disaster and methods used to try to control them.



RESOURCES

- Cause and Effect

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about flooding disasters along the Mississippi River and how people attempt to control them.
- Students will analyze the effects of natural disasters on the Mississippi River.
- Students will research new flood-control measures.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **silt** (p. 28) sand or soil that is carried along by flowing water and then dropped
- **floodplain** (p. 28) an area of flat land near a river that is often flooded when the river becomes too full
- **locks** (p. 30) a section of water with gates at each end where the water level can be changed so boats can move between parts of a river that are at different levels

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: How has the Mississippi River affected the history, culture, and trade of the United States?

Ask students if they have ever experienced a flood or learned about one on the news. Why did it happen? How did it affect the region where it occurred? Discuss with the class why flooding is happening more frequently, and ask them to think of why that might be the case. (Possible answers are climate change/increasing storms, construction of more buildings on floodplains.) Then ask if they think floods are something that people can control, and how.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the following sentences with the key vocabulary words underlined. Review with students how to infer the meaning of new words by using context clues and background knowledge. Then have students work in pairs to determine the meaning of each word. Then reveal the meaning of each word.

1. The silt that accumulated on the farmers' fields made them good for growing crops.
2. The house was often flooded because it had been built on a floodplain near the river.
3. The boat traveled through a series of locks as the water level changed.

READ & DISCUSS

1. What is the main reason why flooding occurs on the Mississippi River?
2. How can wet weather in one section of the country cause flooding in another section of the country?
3. Explain the devastation caused by the biggest flood in history to hit the lower Mississippi.
4. What are some of the ways that people have tried to reduce flooding?
5. What are some of the "green" ways to reduce flooding?

CONCEPT/SKILL FOCUS: Cause and Effect

INSTRUCT: Explain to students that this article describes the causes of flooding and flood-control methods, and what happens as a result. Have them use the information in the article to complete the chart.

ASSESS: Review and evaluate the completed chart.

EXTEND

Science: Invite students to use print and digital sources to research new methods of flood control. Have them write a brief summary of one new method, with a photo or an illustration if possible.

Cause and Effect

Understanding the causes of events and the effect they have helps to see how events happen and what the results of those events are. It can help to recognize patterns and see how certain circumstances develop. Look at the chart below. For each of the flooding events from the article, fill in what happened and what the result was. The first one is done for you.

Cause Why did it happen?	Event What happened?	Effect What happened as a result?
The cycle of annual floods along the Mississippi River	Rich layers of silt are deposited and create rich floodplain land	Farmers have good soil for growing crops
People build more homes on floodplains		
The federal government builds locks, dams, and levees		
The river is engineered to flow faster		