



River Theme Activity Ideas

- **Reading.** Read a book about the Mississippi River or another river. (See suggestions in “River Books” in Big River Teacher’s Guide.)
- **History/geography/art.** Create a “*Landscape of Stories*” mural with the class. Create a large, colorful map of the Mississippi River (or the upper part of it) and use it for placing students’ small story-posters or large postcards about various historical events and sites. Stories may include, e.g., geological origins of the river (show River Warren tributary), American Indian place-names and stories, natural history, fur trade, village and cities, explorers, etc. Draw pictures to go with the stories. Use reference materials such as river history posters (included in the Big River Teacher’s Guide).
- **History.** Identify the origin of place names such as Mississippi, Minnesota, Mendota, Pike Island, Carver’s Cave, St. Paul, Red Wing, Kaposia, etc. See “The Junction of Rivers” poster/guide about American Indians of the Twin Cities area, produced by the Minnesota Historical Society. Include on “Landscape of Stories” mural (see previous.)
- **History.** Write a paper about the Dakota culture of American Indians who lived along the river before arrival of more recent cultures; then find out about the Dakota today. See posters on river history produced by the National Park Service. Use exhibits and references from Fort Snelling State Park Visitor Center.
- **Geography/history.** Compare modern maps of the river with those of 100 or 200 years ago. Identify how the maps are different. How has the river or land changed?
- **Reading.** Read and discuss folk tales, oral traditions and songs about the Mississippi River. (See lyrics to several Mississippi River songs in Teacher’s Guide.)
- **Art.** Draw or paint the Mississippi River based on your field trip experience or other interaction with the river. Make a poster about how to care for the river.
- **Music.** Listen to various river music. Use the video “Mississippi Singing” to hear samples of several songs, or listen to the CD “Great Mississippi” by Singing Ranger Charlie Maguire (both available from the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, <http://www.nps.gov/miss/home.htm>.) Learn the song “Great Mississippi” by Charlie Maguire. (Sheet music available from MNRRA, 651-290-3030, x231.)
- **Writing/poetry.** Write a poem about the river; read it to the class. (See page in Teacher’s Guide to explore various forms of poetry.)
- **Reading/writing.** Collect river-related news stories from newspapers. Share them with the class. Arrange them into your own “River Times” newspaper. Add your own stories and pictures, make your own title, and write an editorial for your paper.

River Theme Activity Ideas, cont'd

- **Science.** Learn about *the water cycle*, and draw a diagram to show how streams, rivers, groundwater, lakes and oceans are all connected. Is it true that the earth is "one body of water?"
- **Service education.** Identify and carry out a project to benefit the Mississippi. Examples include educating others about run-off pollution, stenciling storm drains, cleaning up litter, and planting native trees, shrubs and grasses. (See "Pollution Prevention Project Guide" or the website, <http://cgee.hamline.edu/watershed/action/>)
- **Science.** Use the "Enviroscape" model (available from the Center for Global Environmental Education, or Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, or Project WET) for learning about runoff pollution and how to prevent it. It's a fun and easy to use model that really attracts kids. The "Enviroscape" includes curricula, and can be used with K-12 students.
- **Social studies/science/art.** Learn about various boats used on the Mississippi in the past and present. Write about how and for what they were used, when used, and unique features. Illustrate your report with a drawing of the vessel, or make a model.
- **Social studies.** View the PBS NOVA video on the flood of 1993 (available for check-out from Mississippi National River and Recreation Area); discuss how ways that people use the river could be changed to reduce flooding and its problems. View "Mississippi Singing" video (available for check-out from the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area) to identify and evaluate various uses of the river, and which are most important to you.
- **History/writing/theater.** Learn what it was like to live on the river one century ago in St. Paul. Then write a make-believe diary about your life, and that of your family and friends. Make it into a short play, and perform it for your class.
- **History.** See [The Story of Minnesota's Past](#) by Hillary Wackman and Nancy O'Brien Wagner. The Northern Lights educational program includes an Annotated Teacher's Edition, a Student Edition and a Classroom Resources Workbook, published by the Minnesota Historical Society.
- **Art.** Explore innovative art based curricula that links art and the environment, reuse and recycling. Website www.artstart.org.