

# Mississippi River related Books

## **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** by Mark Twain

Viking Penguin, New York. 1953      *Grades: 6-Adult*

A boy and a runaway slave travel the Mississippi on a raft in an exciting and sometimes dangerous trip. The Mississippi River influenced much of Twain's work, even his pen-name (from a riverboat working command). While the language and dialect reflect their time, and can be discussed in class, Twain's humanity comes through.

## **Biography of a River: The Living Mississippi** by Edith McCall

Walker and Co., New York. 1990      *Grades: 6-12*

This "biography" details stories of human interactions with the Mississippi, from Native Americans, European explorers, and immigrant settlers to modern engineers and dam-builders. The river "speaks" in the first person in the opening chapter. The emphasis on the "living" nature of the river underscores an important environmental lesson.

## **Flood: Wrestling with the Mississippi** by Patricia Lauber

National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C. 1996      *Grades 5-12*

*Flood...* explains that the Mississippi's dynamic nature is to change its course, re-arrange the land, and leave its banks, occasionally causing great flooding. We try to control the river, but are not always successful. Well illustrated. The book asks how we should manage the Mississippi's future, but falls short of a full look at restoration and alternatives.

## **Historical Atlas of the Earth** by Stephen Jay Gould, et. al.

Henry Holt Reference Book, Henry Holt & Co. 1996

This large beautifully illustrated book describes the evolution of Earth landscapes to the present. Forces shaping the Earth, evolution of life, and ecosystems are depicted.

## **Little Crow: Taoyateduta: Leader of the Dakota** by Gwenyth Swain

Borealis Books, Minnesota Historical Society Press. 2004      *Grades: 3-adult*

This book shows a clear, sympathetic telling of the life of Little Crow from his childhood on the banks of the Mississippi River near what is now St. Paul to his death in July 1863. *Little Crow* offers an accessible account of both the man who led the Dakota into war and the causes behind that wrenching conflict. Swain's story is an excellent starting place for both young and older readers to begin understanding the context of the Dakota War of 1862.

## **Minn of the Mississippi** by Holling Clancy Holling

Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 1951      *Grades: 4-8*

The journey of Minn, a snapping turtle, is followed from northern Minnesota to the bayous of Louisiana. The turtle's adventures with people, animals, and the changing seasons are vividly described, and bring the river's history to life. Wonderful drawings and maps accompany the story. Newbery honor book.

## **Mississippi** by Diane Siebert, illustrated by Greg Harlin

Harper Collins. 2001      *Grades: 1-6*

A poetic journey down the length and breadth of the Mississippi River, this picture book depicts the origins, nature, human interactions and changes of the great river.

## **The Mississippi River (Ecosystems of North America series)** by Maria Mudd Ruth

Benchmark Books/Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, New York. 2001      *Grades: 4-10*

An excellent exploration of how the Mississippi River works ecologically, this well illustrated book examines the relationship between the river and its backwaters, floodplains,

watershed, delta, plant life, animal life, and human life. Poses questions of the river's future, articulates key science concepts, includes activities, glossary, and references.

**Mississippi River: A Journey Down the Father of Waters** by Peter Lourie

Boyd's Mills Press, Honesdale, PA. 2000 *Grades 4-9*

Author Peter Lourie travels the modern Mississippi by canoe and over land from Lake Itasca to the delta. Feel the river change from a peaceful shallow marsh to an industrial ocean port. Along the way you will travel through a navigation lock, explore historic sites, share the river with mighty barges, and hunker down for a hurricane in New Orleans.

**Our Endangered Planet: Rivers and Lakes** by Mary Hoff and Mary M. Rogers

Lerner Publications, Minneapolis. 1991 *Grades: 4-9*

A global look at the importance of water and its stewardship. Many illustrations and photographs communicate key water concepts, such as "we all live downstream."

**Painting the Dakota: Seth Eastman at Fort Snelling** by Marybeth Lorbiecki

Afton Historical Society Press, Afton, MN. 2000 *Grades: 4-adult*

Extraordinary watercolor paintings by an Army lieutenant depict Dakota Indian life in the area around Fort Snelling and the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers during the early-mid 1800s. From prairie and river landscapes to images of hunting, gardening and village life, Eastman's paintings and Lorbiecki's text bring the reader closer to the life and customs of the Dakota at a turning point both in their history and that of the Minnesota landscape. A useful complement to the book is the video, "Seth Eastman: Painting the Dakota," which includes the commentary of Dakota people (produced by Twin Cities Public Television and Afton Historical Society Press).

**The River That Gave Gifts: An Afro-American Story** by Margo Humphrey

Children's Book Press, San Francisco. 1987 *Grades: K-5*

Four children in an African village make gifts for wise old Neema. Yanava does not know what to give and seeks inspiration from the river. In addition to themes of respect for elders and validity of different kinds of achievement, the river is portrayed as a source of power.

**Rivers (Make It Work! series)** by Andrew Haslam & Barbara Taylor

Two-Can Publishing, London. 1996 *Grades: 3-9*

Hands-on science and geography models and experiments fill this colorful, practical book about rivers and their features. Explores water cycle, river sources, drainage patterns, waterfalls, dams, deltas, human uses of rivers, flooding, managing rivers, and more.

**Rivers and Lakes** by Simon Holland and Anna Lofthouse

Dorling Kindersley Limited, New York. 2003 *Grades: 3-9*

Packed with facts, this accessible text incorporates excellent photographs and a glossary of terms explaining important words to do with rivers and lakes around the world. The book describes the physical characteristics of rivers as they flow to the sea, and the biological life within them.

**The Wind in the Willows** by Kenneth Grahame; illustrated by Ernest Shepard

Aerie Books, New York. 1988 *Grades: 3-adult*

This wonderful, humorous classic, filled with the curious lives of eccentric animal characters, takes place along a river. The scenic descriptions accurately reflect the habitats of each animal. While the book is often read aloud to younger children, the pace and comic conversations makes it highly entertaining for adults. Includes some challenging vocabulary.

**Horns and Wrinkles** by Joseph Helgerson, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 2006

*Grades 4-7*

Along a magical stretch of the Mississippi River near Blue Wing, Minnesota, twelve year old Claire and her bullying cousin Duke are drawn into an adventure to save family and friends turned to stone by a river spell. Cousin Duke struggles with a Pinocchio type horn which grows each time he refuses to perform an act of kindness while Claire navigates through tricky situations involving river characters such as Bodacious Deepthink the Great Rock Troll, a helpful fairy, and a group of trolls looking for their fathers.

**Tomorrow the River** by Dianne E. Gray, Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 2006 *Grades 6-8*

In 1896, fourteen year old Megan joins her sister and family on their steamboat for the summer riding up the Mississippi River towards St. Paul, Minnesota. Through all of her adventures, learning to swim, navigate the river, take photographs, and work at a clamming business, Megan realizes what is her “true calling.” Newspaper articles give hints about the characters whom Megan meets and are an integral part of the plot. History and river life are skillfully woven into the fast-moving plot.