

Rivers Through Time

Chicago River Classroom Activity

Summary

Students will read or have the book *A River Ran Wild* read to them. They will then discuss and reflect on the messages presented in the book.

This lesson can be used as a pre-lesson before a Friends of the Chicago River classroom program.

Background

Rivers are important natural resources, to plant, animal and human communities. Many cities developed along rivers because of the amenities rivers provide. Rivers can be sources of drinking water as well as food. Rivers can be used to convey waste – including sewage, storm water and industrial waste. Farms and industries can pump the water they need directly from rivers. In some parts of the country, rivers are also used to make electricity. Many people enjoy canoeing, kayaking and fishing in rivers and hiking, biking and nature watching along rivers.

Rivers are important habitats not only for the plants and animals that live in their waters, but also for many plants and animals that, though they do not live in the river, depend on the river as a source of water or food. Animals such as deer and raccoons come to the river to drink. Raccoons and herons visit the river to find food such as frogs and fish. Trees, such as red maple, sycamore and green ash, can be abundant along rivers because they can withstand the occasional floods that can kill other types of trees.

Above the surface of the water, ducks paddle by, feeding on algae and aquatic plants. Waterstriders also skim the surface of the water. In the water itself, fish such as carp, bluegills and sunfish swim about as do tiny microscopic animals like daphnia and copopods. Uni- and multi-cellular algae also float in the water. In the sediment and on the rocks at the bottom of the river, live a wide variety of macroinvertebrates (backboneless animals that are visible to the naked eye) such as crayfish, caddisfly larvae, dragonfly larvae and aquatic worms. Submerged logs also provide habitat for these and other macroinvertebrates

Grade Level: 3rd-4th

Duration: one class period

Objectives:

1. Students will use their listening comprehension skills to draw conclusions
2. Students will be able to articulate several examples of how people have had both positive and negative impacts on rivers

Materials:

- ◆ *A River Ran Wild* by Lynne Cherry

Standards:

- 1.C.2d, 3.C.1a, 13.B.2e

Procedure

- ◆ Ask students to share their experiences with rivers.
 - ◆ Have they ever visited a river or seen a river?
 - ◆ What did the river look like?
 - ◆ How did being next to a river make them feel?
- ◆ Read aloud *A River Ran Wild*
- ◆ Discuss the book with students. Possible discussion questions:
 - ◆ How did the river change over time?
 - ◆ Why did the river get so polluted?
 - ◆ Why do you think people let the river get so polluted?
 - ◆ What did it take to get the river cleaned-up?
 - ◆ Do you think this is a unique story or do you think there are many rivers that need help?
 - ◆ Have you ever seen anywhere or anyone that needed help? What did you do?

Reflection and Assessment

In their journals, have students draw a picture and write about the most important thing they learned from the story *A River Ran Wild*.

Extension

Play river related songs and have students learn river related songs. Some suggestions are:

- ◆ Rivers by Tom and Chris Kastle (www.schoonerman.com/sextant.htm or kastle@enteract.com)
- ◆ Songs from the Seventh Direction by Carter and Connelley (www.geocities.com/credhe/cnc/ or 618-549-0345)