

Name _____

Date _____

Two Approaches: Mississippi River Research Answer Key

Part 1. Mississippi River Fact-Finding

Using the National Park Service's Mississippi River Website: (<http://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm>), find the following information:

Physical Features

1. How long is the Mississippi River? The answer depends on the source; 2552, 2300, 2320, 2350 miles are all acceptable answers.
2. Why are there different measurements for the Mississippi's length? The reported length of a river may increase or decrease as deposition or erosion occurs at its delta, or as meanders are created or cut off.
3. How fast does water flow through it? Speed ranges from 1.2 to 3 mph
4. How large is the Mississippi River watershed? 1.2 million square miles, or 40 percent of the continental U.S.
5. Where are the headwaters of the Mississippi River? Lake Itasca, Minnesota
6. Find three facts that describe the diversity of wildlife in and along the Mississippi River.
Answers will vary, but descriptions may include that the Mississippi River and its floodplain are home to diverse wildlife:
 - At least 260 species of fish, 25 percent of all fish species in North America
 - 40 percent of the nation's migratory waterfowl migrate along the river
 - 60 percent of North American birds (326 species) use the Mississippi basin as they migrate
 - On the Upper Mississippi, 38 species of mussel have been found. On the Lower Mississippi, 60 species have been found
 - More than 50 mammal species live along the Upper Mississippi
 - At least 145 species of amphibians and reptiles inhabit the Upper Mississippi area

Mississippi River Research Answer Key, continued

Human/Social Features

7. How many people rely on water from the Mississippi River? 13-18 million people, or more than 50 cities
8. Name at least three ways humans use the Mississippi River. Transporting people, importing and exporting goods, as a drinking water supply, agriculture irrigation, recreation, ecotourism
9. What percentage of the U.S.'s agricultural exports are produced in the Mississippi River watershed? 92 percent

Bonus Questions (Hint: You will have to find these answers outside the National Park Service website.)

10. What is the origin of the name "Mississippi"? Native Americans, the Ojibwe/Algonquin, meaning "Great River"
11. What famous Mark Twain novel involves a young boy rafting down the Mississippi River? Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Reflection Questions

12. What are some of the benefits of learning about the Mississippi River through fact-finding research? Answers will vary.
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Mississippi River Research Answer Key, continued

Part 2. Exploring and Analyzing the Mississippi River with FieldScope

In FieldScope (<http://lafitte.fieldscope.org>), follow these instructions to learn more about the Mississippi River:

1. Turn on the **National Geographic Basemap** and the **Mississippi River Watershed** layers.
2. Gradually zoom out until you can see the majority of the watershed. Reduce the transparency of the Mississippi River Watershed layer to where you can still see labels below it.
3. Explore the map to identify the following information, using the **Query Tool** to help identify objects as needed:
 - a. How many states does the Mississippi River run through or along? 31
 - b. List five state capitals that are within the watershed. (*Hint: you might have to turn on a different base map to see all of them.*) Answers may include Baton Rouge, Little Rock, Oklahoma City, Memphis, Indianapolis, Des Moines, Denver, Indianapolis, Springfield, Topeka, Frankfurt, St. Paul, Jackson, Jefferson City, Helena, Lincoln, Columbus, Nashville, Bismarck, Pierre, Charleston, Cheyenne
 - c. How many of these capitals are located on a river? (*Hint: you might have to zoom in to be able to tell.*) 8: Baton Rouge, Little Rock, Memphis, Minneapolis, Jefferson City, St. Paul, Bismarck, Pierre
 - d. What countries are in the watershed? U.S., Canada
 - e. What other major rivers are within the watershed? Missouri, Arkansas, and Ohio Rivers
 - f. What are the six regions within the watershed? Ohio, Tennessee, Lower Mississippi, Upper Mississippi, Arkansas White-Red, and Missouri Regions
4. Finally, use the **Measure Tool** to measure the distance between your hometown and the nearest tributary of the Mississippi River watershed. Once you select the **Measure Tool**, click on your hometown, draw a straight line to the closest river that is a part of the watershed, and double-click to end the line.
 - a. What is the distance between your hometown and the nearest tributary of the Mississippi River? Answers will vary.

Mississippi River Research Answer Key, continued

- b. Given this distance, do you think your hometown is influenced by the Mississippi River? Why or why not? Answers will vary.

5. Turn off the **Mississippi River Watershed** layer. Now turn on the **Land Cover** layer, adjusting the transparency to where you can still clearly see the Mississippi River. Use the **Query Tool** to identify the land cover types along the river.

- a. What are the three most common land cover types, based on a visual estimate?

cultivated crops, hay/pasture, deciduous forest

- b. How might the Mississippi River be impacted by the type of land around it? Pollution,

including agriculture run off; land loss

Part 3. Reflect

1. What are some of the benefits of learning about the Mississippi River through spatial exploration in FieldScope? Answers will vary.

2. What else would you like to learn about the Mississippi, and how would you go about learning it? Think about what resources you would use and why. Answers will vary.
