

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

Rivers of the Americas

Students explore the relationships between rivers and early settlements in the United States. They select a major river of the Americas, research it, and write a story from the river's point of view.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

CONTENTS

2 Links, 1 PDF

OVERVIEW

Students explore the relationships between rivers and early settlements in the United States. They select a major river of the Americas, research it, and write a story from the river's point of view.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/rivers-of-americas/>

Program



DIRECTIONS

1. Discuss the role of rivers as major transportation routes and their influence on where people first settled.

Explain to students that rivers were among the first highways of the Americas. Many large cities grew alongside rivers and other waterways, because rivers provided convenient transportation before railroads and roads were built. Display for students the NG Education interactive map. Use the zoom bar and other navigation to explore more major cities and rivers in both North America and South America. Refer to the map to help inform the class discussion.

2. Have students choose a major river in the Americas to research and write about.

Distribute a copy of the worksheet Rivers in the Americas to each student. Have students select a major river to research. Allow students time on the Internet or in the school library to research their river, using the worksheet as a guide. Then have each student write a story from the point of view of the river. The story should be about the river's journey from its source to where it empties into the sea, and should include factual information about the body of water.

3. Have students identify their rivers on a large map of the Americas.

Have students use yarn or markers to outline the river they selected on one of the large maps of the Americas from the Americas MapMaker Kit. Students should indicate the river's source, its length, and where it empties into the sea. Students may also attach pictures or index cards with points of interest along the river.

4. Have students present their stories to the class.

Invite volunteers to read aloud the stories they wrote. Encourage the class to ask presenters questions about the rivers' journeys.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- [Human Geography](#)
- [Physical Geography](#)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- explain the historical importance of rivers as major transportation routes
- describe the relationship between rivers and where people decided to settle, and reasons for it

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Reading
- Research
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Themes
 - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Answering Geographic Questions
 - Asking Geographic Questions

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 1:**

How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

- **Standard 9:**

The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Index cards
- Markers
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens
- Transparent tape
- Yarn

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per learner

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom
- Computer lab

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

OTHER NOTES

Before starting this activity, assemble the Americas Mega Map.

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

A river is a large natural stream of flowing water. Rivers are found on every continent and on nearly every kind of land. Rivers were among the first highways of the Americas. Many large cities grew up alongside rivers and other waterways, which provided convenient transportation before railroads and roads were built.

Prior Knowledge

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
river	<i>noun</i>	large stream of flowing fresh water.

For Further Exploration

Websites

- [USGS: Water Science for Schools—Earth's Water: Rivers and Streams](#)

