



Get Lost on the Mississippi River Corn Maze!



Teacher Curriculum about the Mississippi River and its Louisiana Wetlands

History Lesson

The Mississippi River's name is derived from the American Indian expression "Mee-see-see-bee" which means "Father of Waters" or "Big River".

The first explorers to see the River were Hernando DE SOTO and his party in 1541.

In 1682 the French explorer La Salle journeyed down the Mississippi River to its mouth and claimed for France all the lands drained by the river and its tributaries.

The area at the mouth of the Mississippi River was named Louisiana in honor of King Louis XIV the reigning French monarch.

In 1718 the French chose one of the marshy areas of the Louisiana Delta Region near the mouth of the Mississippi River to establish a new city. Despite its precarious location, surrounded by swamps and subject to flooding, New Orleans was born. The French hoped that by controlling the mouth of the River, they could control all of its traffic.

In 1722 the French military engineer, Adren de Pauger, laid out the streets of the city in a grid pattern, forming what is now known as the French Quarter.

In 1762 as a result of the French and Indian War, Louisiana was divided and New Orleans came under Spanish control.

Between 1788 and 1794, while under Spanish Control, New Orleans suffered two great fires. The city was rebuilt under Spanish control and still reflects some Spanish architecture for this reason.

In 1800, under Napoleon, the French regained ownership of New Orleans by secret treaty. Under President Thomas Jefferson, the Americans eventually purchased the entire Louisiana territory from the French in 1803 which is known as the Louisiana Purchase.

Science and Nature Lesson

Two hundred and forty-one species of fish are at home in the Mississippi River watershed.

The river and its major tributaries supply drinking water for more than 18 million people.

At the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico there is an area of 5000 to 8000 square miles called the "dead zone". The dead zone is severely depleted of oxygen. The dead zone is created from all the pollution that accumulates at the bottom of the River.

Understanding watershed on the Mississippi River is the most important fact when it comes to polluting the River. Even though industries along the River are guilty of dumping waste directly into the River, the leading cause of pollution is from the vast runoff that dumps into the watershed areas from streets and rural farmland.

Historically the River would have been left alone to flow and shift as nature would have it. This natural flow created an area surrounding the mouth called wetlands. Wetlands are shallow water generating waterlogged plant-life and soils. The wetlands act as a natural filter to clean pollutants from the water. But growing industry along the River has forced it to a set channel therefore, destroying thousands of acres of wetlands.

The wetlands are crucial to the health of our waters and wildlife habitat. Unfortunately we lose up to 60,000 acres of wetlands each year.

Today, there are many programs that are encouraging landowners to “restore” these wetlands. Restoration is the return of a degraded wetland or a former wetland to its preexisting naturally functioning condition.



Creative Thinking

Wetlands are home to thousands of species. Can you imagine some of the animals that thrive in Wetlands? Do you think an elephant can live in wetlands? What about alligators? How would you explore wetland areas? How would you travel around a wetland? Can you drive a car through wetlands?

Language, Reading and Writing

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina impacted Mississippi and Louisiana. What are some of the characteristics of a Hurricane? How do you think a hurricane can affect Wetlands? How can massive rainfall cause pollution in the Mississippi River? How can flooding cause destruction of wetlands?

Have students write a paragraph describing damage they may have seen that might have ultimately affected the River or some wetlands.

Have students make a list of things that could be pollutants. What types of everyday items can end up in the watersheds? List those items that would not be good to eat or drink.

An activity in Geography:

Have students color and map the Mississippi River watershed to understand how pollutants flow into the River. See attached worksheet.

Corn Math:



- An ear of corn averages 800 kernels in 16 rows.
- A pound of corn consists of approximately 1,300 kernels.
- 100 bushels of corn produces approximately 7,280,000 kernels.
- A bushel of shelled corn weighs 56 pounds.
- Average yield per acre of corn is 125 bushels of shelled corn.
- Seed corn is purchased in bags containing 80,000 kernels
- Approximately 24,000 to 30,000 seeds/kernels per acre are plated.
- Currently a bushel of corn sells for about \$2.25.

Some exercises in corn math:

How much would 5 bushels of corn weigh?

If a farmer has 500 bushels of corn, how many kernels would he have?

If a farmer has 50 acres planted in corn, how many bushels can he expect?

If a farmer needs 400,000 kernels to plant, how many bags of seed corn does he need to buy?

A farmer sold 350 bushels of corn, how much money did he receive?

If you had \$18.00, how many bushels of corn could you buy?

Some Interesting Corn Facts:



- Corn is a member of the grass family.
- Corn was first grown by Native Americans over 7,000 years ago.
- The United States is the largest grower of corn.
- Corn is grown on all continents except Antarctica.
- About half of all corn grown in the U.S. is fed to livestock such as cows, pigs and chickens.
- Corn can be found in over 3,700 products.
- Corn has Non-food uses also. It can be found in: toothpaste, detergents, rubber tires, batteries, paints, cosmetics, fireworks, medicines, glues, and shoe polish.
- One of the most important uses of corn is ethanol. Ethanol can be used as a fuel for motorized engines.
- Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska and Minnesota account for over 50 percent of the corn grown in the U.S.
- Christopher Columbus was the first to introduce corn to the Europeans after tasting it in America.
- Mississippi Farmers produced 100,000 bushels of corn in 2008. That was the second largest crop from Mississippi.

