

Stream Walk

Chicago River Fieldtrip Activity

Summary

Students are divided into three groups. Each group takes a stream walk along the Chicago River answering questions about different aspects of the river environment.

Procedure

Before the field trip

Divide the class into three teams: land, water and people. Ideally, there should be no more than 10 students per team. Assign an adult leader to each team. Adult leaders are responsible for posing the team questions and facilitating discussion.

You can choose to either use the enclosed question lists for each team or have students create their own list of questions. Either way, photocopy the questions before the field trip. Each student and leader in the team should have a copy of the team questions.

At the field trip

Introduce the activity to students, letting them know that they will be taking a 20 minute walk along the river and observing the river and land around it. Each team will be responsible for focusing on a different aspect of the environment and presenting their findings to the entire class. Make sure all team leaders have a watch and know when to meet back together.

As teams are walking along the river, the team leader should pose the team questions, team members will discuss among themselves and make notes (observations, guesses, and questions) related to their topic. Leaders should encourage students to use their four senses (every one but taste!) to develop their responses to the questions.

After 20 minutes student groups should meet back together. Students can either prepare their presentations while on the field trip or back in the classroom.

Grade Level: 6th -8th

Duration: 30 min at river, 45 minutes in classroom for students' oral presentations

Objectives:

1. Students, teachers and parents get to know the river.
2. Students develop observation and reasoning skills.
3. Students get to apply concepts learned in the class to the real world.

Materials:

- ◆ Map (topographic or street map so students can see what the land around the river is like). (1 per class)
- ◆ Copies of land, water and people questions (1 of each).

Standards:

12.B.3a, 4.B.3a



After the field trip

If students did not have time to develop their presentations while on the field trip, they should do so back in class. Each team should then give a short presentation (5 minutes) to the entire group.

Water Group

1. Where is the water going?

Hint – the water does more than just go down stream (for example, some evaporates)

2. What is the color of the water?

Why do you think the water is that color?

3. Describe the water's *clarity*.

Can you see through the water?

Can light pass through the water?

Why do you think the water is clear or murky?

How might this affect the plants and animals living in the river?



4. Do you see any animals, or evidence of animals in the river or on the riverbanks? Describe.

Do you think there are animals that you can't see? What type?

5. Do you see any plants in the river or on the riverbanks? Describe.

How could these plants help the river?

6. Do you see any evidence of erosion or flooding near the riverbank?

Describe what you see:

How does erosion and flooding affect the river?

7. Do you see any pollution in the river? Describe:

Where might the pollution be coming from?

8. What does the river channel look like?

Is the channel straight or does it curve? Is this natural, or do you think it has been modified by people?

9. If you came to the river in another two months, what would be different? What would be the same? Be specific.

10. What is one thing about the river you would like to know more about?



Land Group

1. What is the *topography* like here?

Is it hilly or flat here?

What happens to a drop of rain when it lands the ground? Consider both a flat area and a place that slopes downward.

2. What is the *vegetation* like?

Is it a woods, prairie, wetland or a combination?

Are there plants along the river's bank? How much of the river would be shaded on a sunny day?

Does the vegetation change as you move away from the river? How?

How do you think the plants affect the river? (Think about their impact on the soil and sunlight.)



3. Do you see any animals or evidence of animals on the land near the river? Describe.

Do you think there are animals that you can't see? What type?

4. Do you see any man-made structures? Are there buildings, walls, dams, etc.?

5. Do you see any evidence of *erosion* or *flooding*?

Describe what you see along the riverbanks and on the land surrounding the river.

How does flooding or erosion affect the river?

6. Do you see any pollution on the land?

Is there litter?

Are there signs of other types of pollution?

7. If you came to the river in another two months, what would be different? What would be the same? Be specific.

8. What is one thing about the river you would like to know more about?



People Group

1. Describe your trip from the bus to the river.

Was it easy to travel?

Is there evidence that other people have traveled the same route before?

2. Are there any trails along the river or leading to the river?

Where do they come from? Where do they go?

How might the trails be used?

Is there a good way to get to the river's edge? How?

3. What signs of humans do you see, both near the river and on the surrounding land?

Are there man-made structures (roads, trails, and buildings)?

Is there trash?

Are there people enjoying the river or river's edge? How?

4. Is there evidence of humans affecting the river in a positive or negative way?

Is there any pollution? Where might it be coming from?

Is there any evidence of erosion? Do you think people have contributed to the erosion?

Have there been any changes made to the river channel or river bank?
(Hint: Is the river channel very straight or does it curve? Are the banks made of metal and cement, or dirt and plants?)

Is there good access to the river?

Has there been recent plantings?

5. How could people enjoy the river?

Is there a place from which to launch a canoe into the river?

Is there a quiet place from which to fish?

Are there other ways to enjoy the river?

Would you suggest doing anything to improve people's enjoyment of the river?

5. If you came to the river in another two months, what would be different? What would be the same? Be specific.

6. What is one thing about the river you would like to know more about?