

# What is a River?

## Chicago River Classroom Activity

### Summary

Students will observe models of rivers, oceans, lakes and ponds and use clues to understand how they differ.

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

### Procedure

- ◆ Fill each of the bowls and the saucer with water.
- ◆ While students are watching, pour a quarter of a cup of salt into the largest bowl.
- ◆ Show students the bowls and saucer.
- ◆ Ask the students to describe how the three objects are different. (Be sure that a student notes that the objects are different sizes and that they hold different amounts of water and that one of them has salt and water in it.)
- ◆ Ask the students to describe what is similar about the objects. (Be sure that a student notes that each of the objects is holding water.)
- ◆ Ask the students which container is the largest and deepest. Remind them that this is the one that is salty.
- ◆ Ask the students which container is the smallest and the shallowest.
- ◆ Bring out the turkey pan. Pour water into the pan so that it moves “downhill”.
- ◆ Ask the students what they notice about the water – how is it different from the other water in the bowls and saucer? (It is moving rapidly downhill and is long and winding.)
- ◆ Tell the students that the containers represent different types of water bodies in the world. As you discuss each one, show what it looks like on a map and show a picture of it.
- ◆ The large bowl is the largest, deepest and it is salty. What type of water body does that sound like? (*Ocean*) Tell the students that the oceans are the largest bodies of water in the world. They are salty. When we look at the map oceans are the blue areas we see around the land.

**Grade Level:** K – 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Duration:** One class period

#### Objectives:

1. Students will understand the general properties of rivers and how they differ from other water bodies.
2. Students will understand the ways in which oceans, lakes ponds and rivers are represented on maps.

#### Materials:

- ◆ Large, deep bowl
- ◆ Small, shallow bowl
- ◆ Small saucer
- ◆ Turkey pan filled with a mix of pebbles and topsoil, angle soil so that it is higher at one end of the pan than the other
- ◆ Salt
- ◆ Water in a bucket
- ◆ Measuring cups
- ◆ Map of the world
- ◆ Map of Illinois
- ◆ Books and videos with pictures of rivers, lakes, ponds and oceans

#### Standards:

12.E.1a, 17.A.1a, 17.A.1b,  
17.B.1a

- ◆ The medium bowl is not salty, it is smaller than the largest bowl and not as deep as the largest bowl. What type of water body does that sound like? (*Lake*) Lakes are far smaller and less deep than the oceans. They are usually not salty (through there are a few exceptions like Salt Lake in Utah). Lakes can be big, like the Great Lakes, or much smaller.
- ◆ The saucer is the smallest of the three bowls and holds the least amount of water. What type of water body does that sound like? (*Pond*) Ponds are very small bodies of water, so they usually don't put them on big world maps, but they do show up on smaller maps. They are not salty.
- ◆ In the turkey pan is a ribbon of water that moves downhill. What type of water body does that sound like? (*River*) Rivers are long bodies of water that move downhill. They can be very long, even going across the whole country! These long blue lines on the map show rivers.
- ◆ Ask the students:
  - ◆ Are there any oceans near their home? (*No*)
  - ◆ Are there any lakes near their home? (*Yes-Lake Michigan*)
  - ◆ Are there any ponds near their home? (*Yes-in some city parks and the forest preserves*)
  - ◆ Are there any rivers near their home? (*YES-The Chicago River*)

## Reflection

Tell the students to pretend they are space travelers and have discovered a new planet. Explain that the museum that they work for would like them to draw a map of the new country and are especially interested in the water bodies there. Tell the students they are to draw a map of the new country they have discovered. They must make sure to draw all the oceans, lakes, ponds and rivers just like they saw on the map of the world. You may want to reshow students how these water bodies look on a map.