

SPECIAL REPORT: FLOOD OF THE GREAT RIVER

Students organize their own media broadcast centered around an actual flood and act as reporters reporting the breaking news from a variety of angles.

TEACHER NOTES FOR DISCUSSION

In this activity, students work in groups as “television crews.” Each group is responsible for generating the flood-related topics they wish to research. Using that information, the crews then report on a Mississippi River flood. To ensure that causes, management strategies, and history are all covered, have students turn in a preliminary list of questions. Add, or prompt students to add, any important questions they have omitted.

Assessment Notes

After students present their special report, ask the rest of the class if they still have questions. This will help the presenters understand the types of questions they should have addressed. Also, ask the rest of the class if the visual aids adequately conveyed information.

RELATED STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

Geography

Standard 7. Knows the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth’s surface

- knows the major processes that shape patterns in the physical environment
- knows the consequences of a specific physical process operating on Earth’s surface

Standard 15. Understands how physical systems affect human systems

- knows the effect of natural hazards on human systems in different regions of the United States and the world

Objective

By the end of this activity, students should be able to research flood-related information and compile information regarding floods including:

- the causes of flooding;
- the history of the Mississippi’s floods;
- current management strategies used to control flooding.

Time Considerations

Instructor preparation:
15 minutes

Student activity:
three classes

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UNDERSTAND YOUR MISSION

In this activity, you will explore the causes, history, and management of the floods of the Mississippi River. Your news crew will break the news that the river has jumped its banks and is threatening cities and towns.

LEARN THE LINGO

dams	a barrier preventing the flow of water
flood	a rising and overflowing of a body of water
flood gate	a gate for shutting out, admitting, or releasing a body of water
levee	an earthen mound or ridge for preventing flooding
lock	an enclosure (as in a canal) with gates at each end used in raising or lowering boats as they pass from level to level

Gather Your Supplies

- books related to floods and the Mississippi River
- reference material
- props for creating a live newscast

BACKGROUND

The Mississippi River is an awesome force. Spring rains can cause the river to swell beyond its banks. This naturally occurring event pits people against nature. If you lived anywhere in the Midwest during the Flood of 1993, you probably witnessed such a battle first hand and you probably figured out that we lost miserably. Many homes, buildings, entire towns, farmland, and human lives were lost. What could we have done to prevent or soften the blow? How did the people caught up in the floods survive? What were the actual events taking place during these floods?

Think about a recent national or international event that has been extensively covered by the media. It is the responsibility of the press to cover every aspect of the event—to leave no stone unturned—as they answer all the questions about the event.

Breaking news requires that a news team gets the facts out to the viewers as quickly as possible. A good news team will tackle a media event from many different angles. For example, when the women's soccer team won the World Cup in 1999, the press was quick to report the victory. In addition, they interviewed the important players and talked to the coaches. They also analyzed the strategy of the U.S. team in relation to the Chinese team. Interviews with the fans conveyed the spirit at the event; charts showed how the U.S. team stacked up in comparison to the Chinese team; and, the best players' statistics were analyzed.

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The media even looked at the media coverage of the event and the growing popularity of the sport. In short, the press exploited every possible avenue in order to quench the public's thirst for information about the Women's World Cup team.

CHART A COURSE FOR EXPLORATION

1. The Mississippi River is cresting and about to flood. What questions do you have? Put yourself in someone else's shoes—a farmer, an elderly person living near the river, a boat or barge captain. What questions would they have? Brainstorm a good long list. Have one person write down all the questions regardless of how crazy they are.
2. Go through your list and think of who could answer each question. What type of professional would know the information? These are the people you will want to appear on your broadcast. Make a list, choose who will be appearing on your special report broadcast, and assign group members to be the experts. Your experts might include a meteorologist, water resource scientist, survivors, or a government official. At this time, you will also want to choose an anchor and a reporter or two.
3. Research the answers to the questions. Be ready to present your findings in an up-to-the-minute special report.
4. Finally, create props, rehearse, and present your live news cast to an audience.

Note: How thoroughly and effectively you cover the flood will be evaluated. Visual aids such as maps and charts will be important.

Go Beyond

- Invite a local newscaster to your school for a first hand account of how they report big events.
- Visit a local news station for a student tour.
- Obtain actual news tapes of the Flood of '93 from a local news station.
- Interview flood victims or invite a former flood victim into class.

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This is a performance task where students apply what they have learned directly into their performance of the newscast.

	EXPERT	PROFICIENT	NOVICE
PRESENTATION CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> reflects numerous pieces of information <input type="checkbox"/> directly relates to causes, history, and management of Mississippi flood waters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> portrays a minimum of information related to the causes, history, and management of Mississippi flood waters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> lacks adequate information regarding causes, history, and management of Mississippi flood waters
PRESENTATION PERFORMANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> well-rehearsed and organized <input type="checkbox"/> realistic, entertaining, and informative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat rehearsed and organized <input type="checkbox"/> contains elements of realism and are somewhat entertaining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> evident that the presentation has not been rehearsed <input type="checkbox"/> performers are disorganized and unprepared
PRESENTATION SCRIPTS PROPS VISUAL AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> script is original and creative <input type="checkbox"/> props and visual aids are neatly made and effectively used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> script contains the required information <input type="checkbox"/> props and visual aids used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> script was incomplete and contains numerous mistakes <input type="checkbox"/> props and visual aids are absent or inappropriately used

REFERENCES

—. Hamline University Graduate School of Education, St. Paul, MN.
<www.govoff.state.ms.us/river.htm>, March 21, 2000.

Kendall, John S. and Robert J. Marzano. *Content Knowledge: The McREL Standards Database*. <<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>>, March 16, 2000.