

STAMP IT

Students combine the written and visual arts to create a commemorative stamp collection centered upon a Mississippi River theme.

TEACHER NOTES FOR DISCUSSION

A great way to get students excited about this activity is to bring in some different stamps or have the students bring in any stamps they might have. A live introduction provides an enthusiastic kick-off to this activity. If it is feasible, invite a stamp collector or postal employee to talk about stamps.

To help students start thinking about how to best represent the different Mississippi River themes, discuss some of them and brainstorm what symbols or subjects would be representative. Many commemorative stamps have one or two sentences on the back to describe the stamp. This offers students a good opportunity to write concise, short descriptions of each stamp in their collection.

When students are finished, they can present their stamps and discuss with the class the themes they chose and the stories behind the pictures/symbols they have chosen to represent their themes. The stamps make an interesting bulletin board. Have students vote on their favorite collections.

Objective

By the end of this activity, students should be able to represent a theme using its component parts by combining the visual and written forms.

Time Considerations

Instructor preparation:
15 minutes

Student activity:
two classes

RELATED STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

History

Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective

- understands that specific individuals and the values those individuals held had an impact on history
- analyzes the influence specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history
- analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history
- knows different types of primary and secondary sources and the motives, interests and bias expressed in time

Language Arts

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

- uses a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics
- determines the appropriateness of an information source for a research topic

Art

Standard 4: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

S T A M P I T

UNDERSTAND YOUR MISSION

In this activity you will choose a Mississippi River theme and create a collection of different stamps to depict that theme.

LEARN THE LINGO

Six main parts of a stamp

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. border line | line between the margin and the frame |
| 2. denomination | the number that shows how much the stamp costs |
| 3. frame | surrounds the vignette (many stamps do not have frames). |
| 4. margin | unprinted area that surrounds the stamp. |
| 5. perforations | holes around the edge of the stamp. |
| 6. vignette | the picture part of the stamp. |

Two major types of stamps

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| commemorative stamps | large, colorful stamps that honor important people, events, or subjects; they are produced in limited numbers for a limited time. |
| definitive stamps | “everyday” stamps; many feature former presidents, statesmen, prominent persons, and national shrines; large quantities are produced. |

Gather Your Supplies

- construction paper, white plus a variety of background colors
- glue or tape
- markers, colored pencils, paints
- note cards (3 x 5)
- pinking shears

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The U.S. Postal Service receives thousands of suggestions from people for stamp subjects. From the suggestions, a Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee composed of artists, historians, business people, and stamp collectors select which stamps will be created. After that, an artist is hired to draw the stamp. The artist's finished work is submitted to the Postmaster General for approval. Next the design is printed in color on rolls of special paper, adhesive gum is applied to the back of the paper, and a special machine adds perforations. Finally the stamps are inspected for flaws and sent to post offices to be sold.

S T A M P I T

CHART A COURSE FOR EXPLORATION

You are an artist and historian who specializes in the history of the Mississippi River valley. Create a commemorative stamp collection of one Mississippi River theme.

Possible Mississippi River Themes

- music, arts, and literature
- people
- military /The Civil War
- environment/biology
- river formation
- business on the river
- river management
- river transportation

1. Choose a theme to research from the list above or choose your own.
2. Choose 8-10 subjects that represent your theme.
3. Create, sketch, and color your vignettes from the subjects you have chosen. Make sure to include all of the parts of a stamp.
4. To form a frame around your vignette, paste it onto a colored pieces of construction paper that is bigger than your picture. Your stamps can be whatever shapes you choose.
5. Using pinking shears, cut all around your stamp to give it a “perforated” look.
6. On note cards, write 2-3 short and to the point sentences that describe each one of your illustration and its tie to your overall theme.
7. Glue or tape each description to its coordinating stamp.
8. Present your commemorative Mississippi River stamp collection to the class.

Go Beyond

As a class, vote on your favorite collections and send them to:

The Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee.

Stamp Administration and Advisory Branch
U.S. Postal Service
475 L’Enfant Plaza SW

Washington, DC
20260-6753

STAMP IT

	EXPERT	PROFICIENT	NOVICE
THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> all stamp subjects relate to one river theme <input type="checkbox"/> the subjects provide excellent examples, which reflect the strength of the theme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> all stamp subjects relate to the river, but several fall outside the theme <input type="checkbox"/> several subjects do an excellent job highlighting the theme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> fewer than eight stamp subjects relate to the Mississippi River, and collectively the stamps do not represent a single theme
ILLUSTRATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> professional looking stamps—could be tacked onto an envelope and might even fool the US postal service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> nearly all the stamps show attention to detail, but several stamps require a few touch ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> greater attention to detail is needed
DESCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> interesting and appropriate descriptions of each subject <input type="checkbox"/> concise writing highlights the important information about each stamp <input type="checkbox"/> no G.U.M. (grammar, usage, mechanics) errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> interesting and appropriate descriptions of each subject <input type="checkbox"/> fewer than 3 G.U.M. errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> more than 4 G.U.M. errors <input type="checkbox"/> at least three descriptions do not match their stamps' subjects

REFERENCES

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

US Postal Service. *The Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps*. Pamphlet.

National Wildlife Federation. *Ranger Rick*, March 1986.

Schaffer's, Frank. "A Stamp Safari." *Classmate*, Apr./May/June 1987.