

Reversing the Flow of the Chicago River: An Engineering Marvel or Environmental Catastrophe?

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AHTC Summer Fellowship 2009

National Archives and Records Administration, Chicago, IL

Lesson 1: Humans and Rivers; Chicago River Pollution

Procedure:

- As students arrive in class, they should answer the question, “What are the functions of rivers?” in their notebooks independently.
- After a couple minutes, we will discuss answers in class, and contrast their roles for the environment and society. Students will use the following graphic organizer to record notes.
- Discuss bottom of chart – human impacts on the natural process of rivers. Example of human-environment interaction – define as a class.
- Using chart, discuss natural purpose and process of rivers and tributaries. Use Google Earth to show Chicago River. Original flow into lake, explain that it was reversed, and connects to Illinois River and flows to Mississippi (example for Graphic Organizer).
- Show photos of Union Stock Yards. [Attached PowerPoint] Production center of Chicago – waste dumping from the yards. Project designed to reverse river from that point to Lake Michigan
- In pairs, students will analyze dumping article with analysis worksheet. Class will conclude with a discussion of the author of the document – the source for most of the documents for the unit. [See dumping file]