

LEVELED Book • N

The Mighty Mississippi

MULTI
level
H•K•N

Written by Caryn Swark

www.readinga-z.com

The Mighty Mississippi



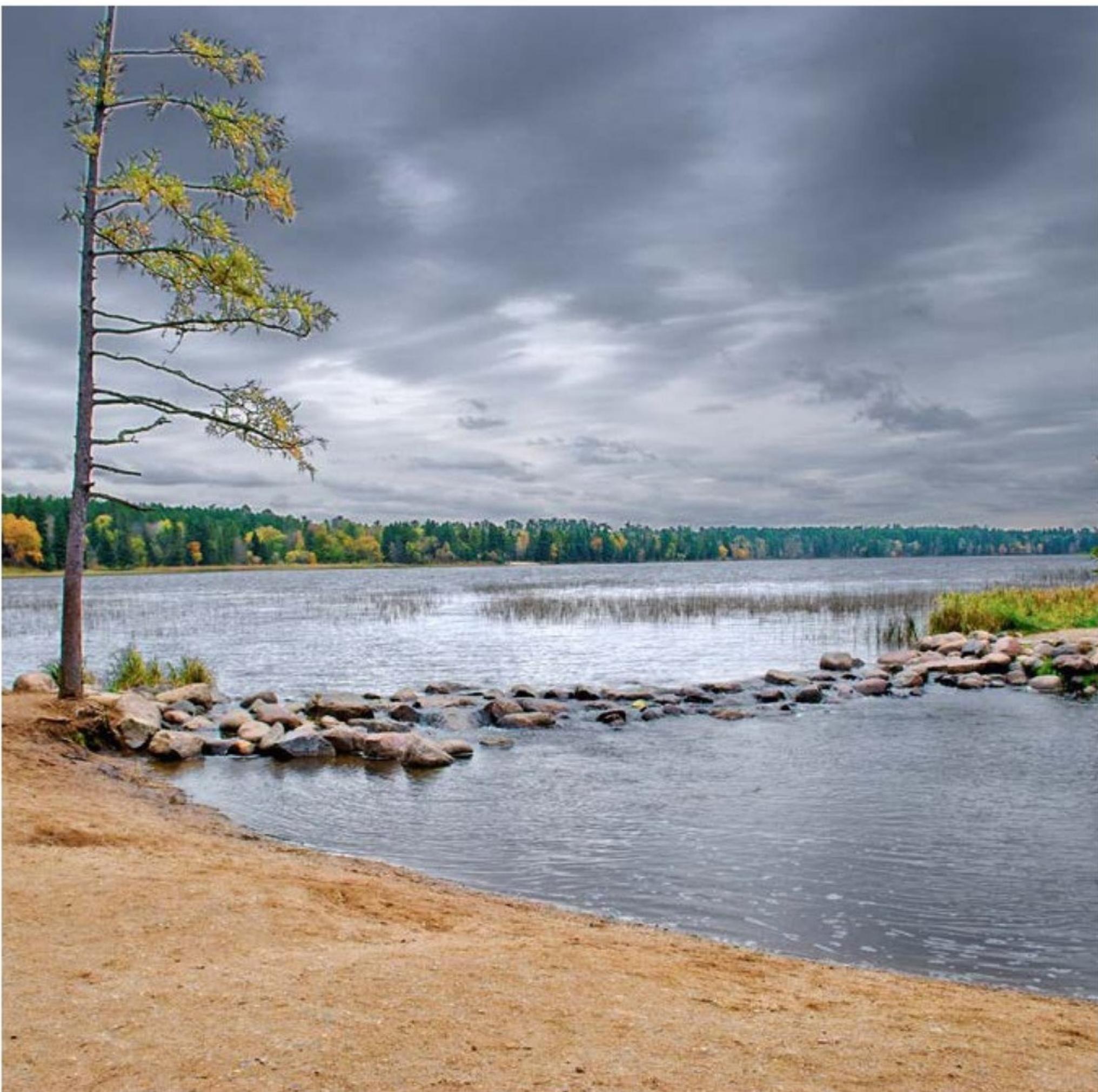
Written by Caryn Swark

The Mighty Mississippi



Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| An Epic Journey | 4 |
| The Upper River | 6 |
| The Lower River | 11 |
| The Mighty Mississippi | 15 |
| Glossary | 16 |



Rain falls on Minnesota's Lake Itasca—and the start of the Mississippi River.

An Epic Journey

Rain falls on Lake Itasca in Minnesota. It mixes into the clear waters of a river so small that a child could wade across it. This is the start of the mighty **Mississippi River**.

The Mississippi Watershed



A *watershed* is the area that drains into a river or lake. The Mississippi River watershed is the fourth largest in the world. It includes all or parts of thirty-one U.S. states and a bit of Canada.

A *tributary* is a river or stream that flows into a larger river. The Mississippi has many tributaries. One—the Missouri—is even longer than the Mississippi!

Over the next three months, the water will take a 2,350-mile (3,781 km) journey through ten U.S. states. It will flow past plants, animals, cities, towns, and farmland. It will carry food and other items to people up and down the river. At last, it will enter the Gulf of Mexico.



This lock (left) between Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, can raise or lower boats so that they can pass around Ford Dam (right) and continue their trip along the Mississippi.

The Upper River

After leaving the lake, the water flows through dozens of **locks** and **dams**. Together, they make it safe for boats to travel. They hold back water so boats don't hit the river bottom.



Ground corn pours onto a barge in Iowa.

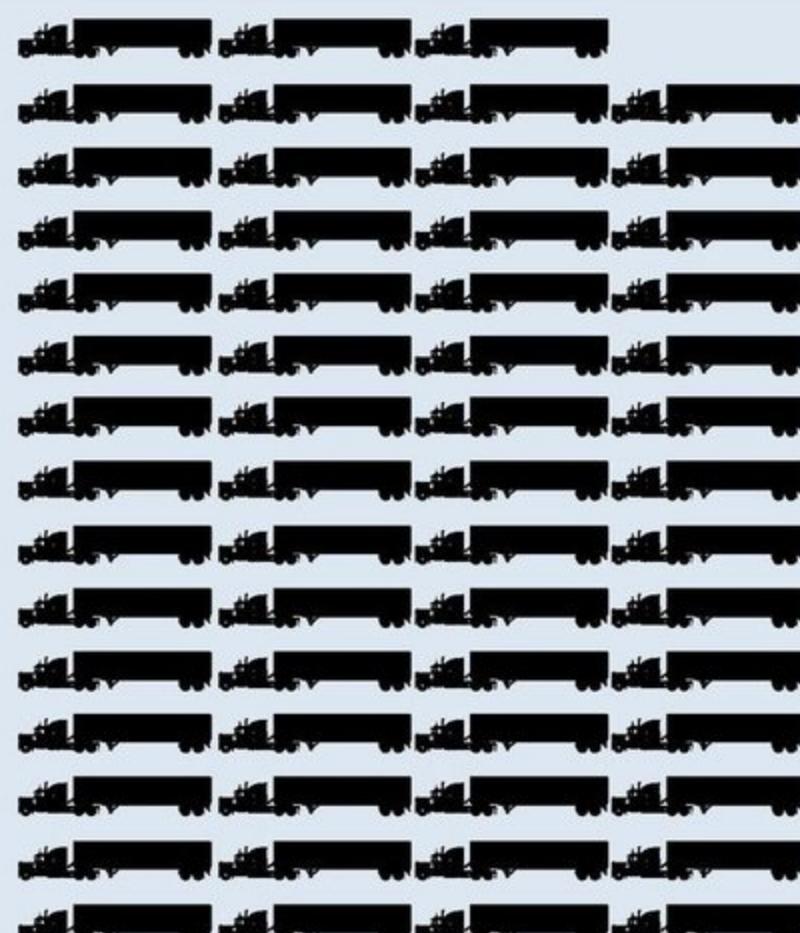
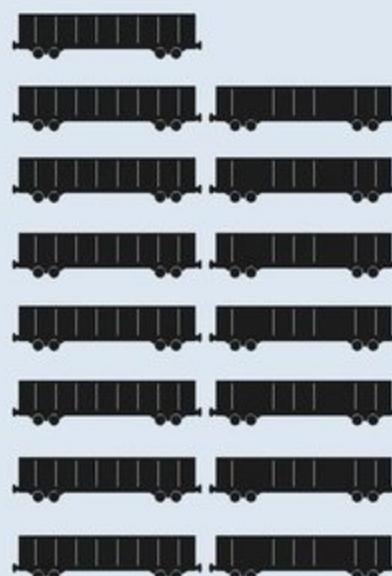
Barge Basics

A barge is a large boat with a flat bottom that carries goods. Compared to semi trucks, barges are a great way to carry a big load!

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



1 Barge = 15 Train Cars



= 58 Trucks

Boats on this part of the river carry corn and soybeans south. Much of this food is **shipped** around the world.



river otters

More than fifty types of mammals live along the upper river. Playful river otters hunt and swim here.

Oldies but Goodies

At least 260 kinds of fish—25 percent of all fish types in North America—live in the Mississippi River. One kind is the pallid sturgeon, one of the oldest fish on Earth. It has hardly changed in 70 million years.



pallid sturgeon



Eight miles (13 km) north of the St. Louis Arch (right), the Missouri River joins the Mississippi (above).



A few miles north of St. Louis, Missouri, the muddy Missouri River comes in from the west. It mixes with the clear waters of the Mississippi and passes along its nickname: “The Big Muddy.” The Mississippi grows wide here, too.



For the next 190 miles (306 km), the river runs through areas with many wild animals. Bald eagles nest in the tall trees and eat the fish that swim in the river.

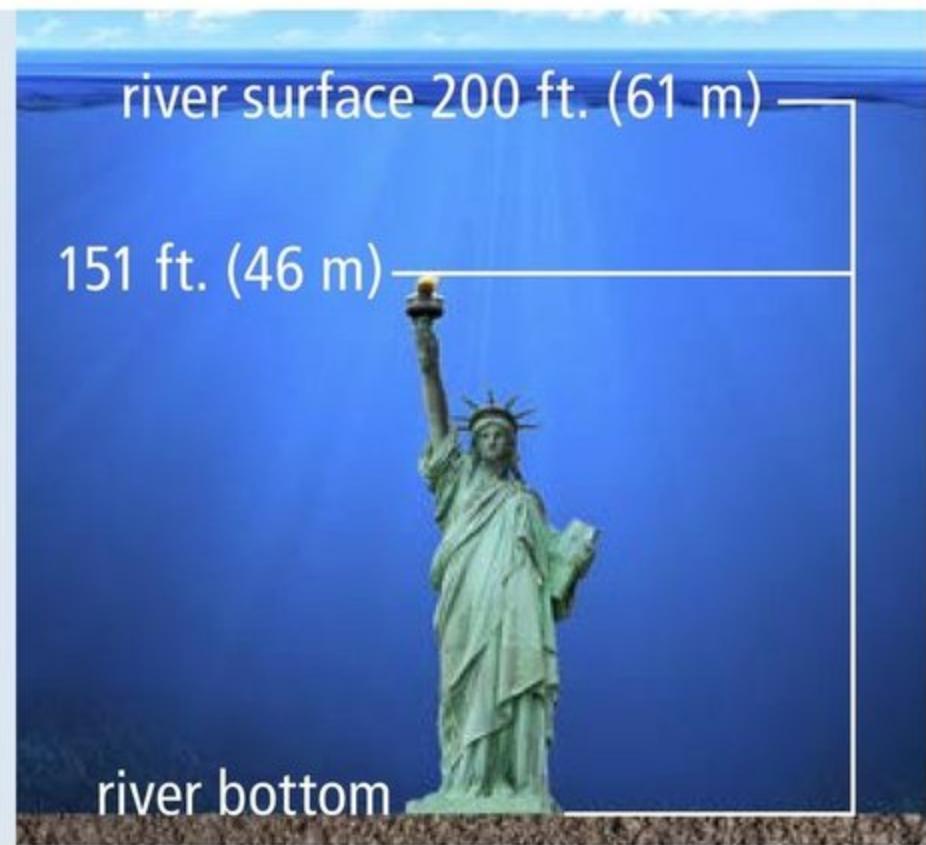


The Lower River

Next, the Ohio River comes in from the east and joins the Mississippi. The amount of water doubles, and the river grows wider still. In many spots, it stretches 1.5 miles (2.4 km) from bank to bank. By the time the river reaches Louisiana, the Mississippi is deep enough in some places to cover the Statue of Liberty.

Do You Know?

The Statue of Liberty is 151 feet (46 m) tall without her base and pedestal. At its deepest, the Mississippi is 200 feet (61 m) deep, more or less. The river's depth changes from year to year.



The Lower Mississippi has no dams. It does have a system to contain floods, but some **floods** are just too big. In fact, the Mississippi is famous for its floods, which sometimes destroy buildings and even kill people.

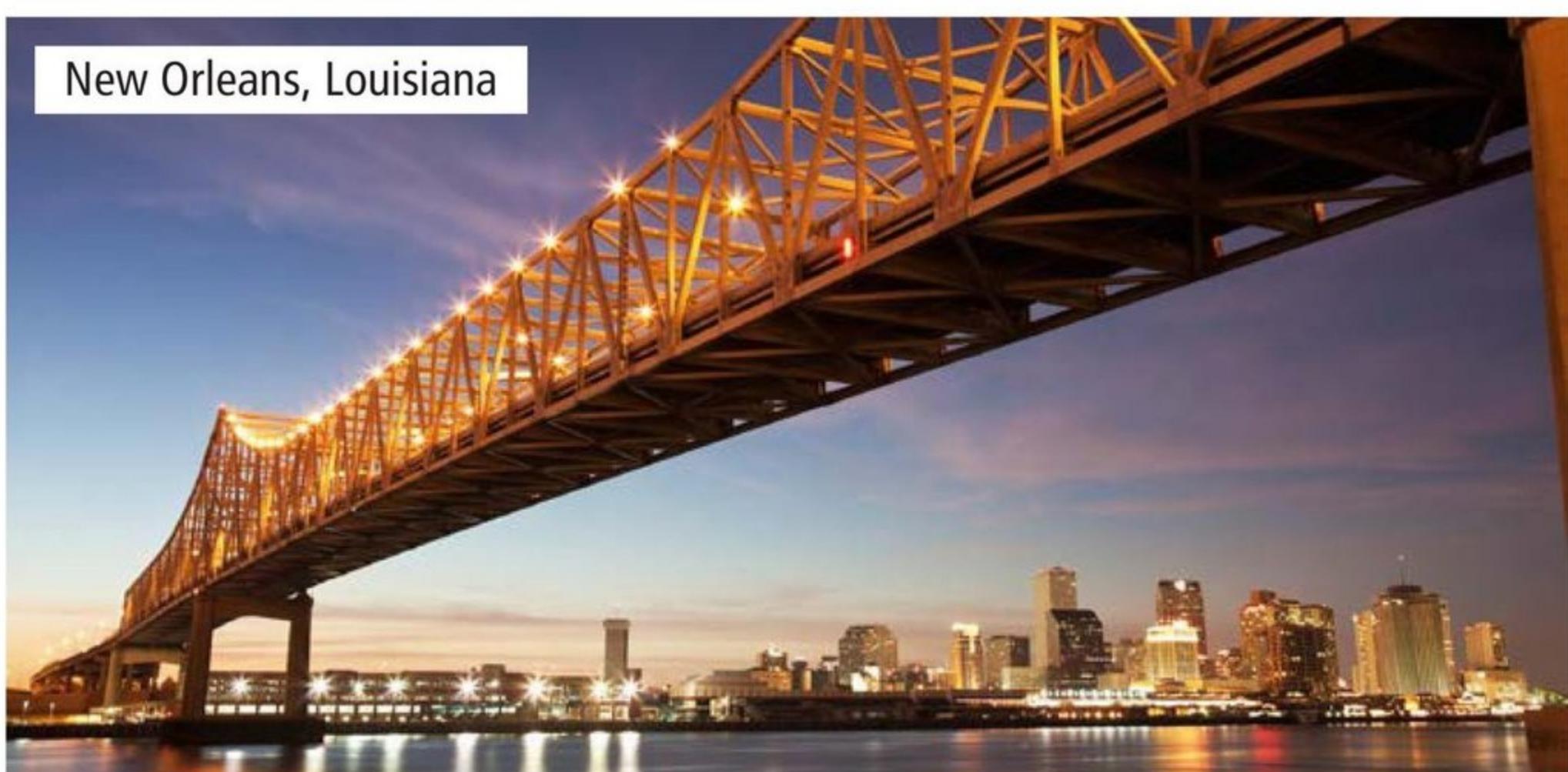


A man rescues his cat after a 2012 flood in the area around New Orleans, Louisiana. His home was flooded by 12 feet (4 m) of water.

Yet the floods are not all bad. Along the river's banks, the rich soil that the floods leave behind makes good farmland for cotton and grains.

Along the lower part of the river, more cities rise up. From Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans, Louisiana, boats carry iron and steel, rubber, paper, and wood. They carry farm crops such as cotton from the area, too. Some items move north, back up the river, and some move farther south.

New Orleans, Louisiana





An alligator rests on a floating log in Louisiana.

Several types of turtles call this part of the river home. So does the American alligator.

Swimming All Summer

Even humans swim in the river sometimes. In the summer of 2002, Slovenian long-distance swimmer Martin Strel swam the entire length of the river, from Minnesota to Louisiana, in sixty-eight days.





This satellite image shows the Mississippi River from space. It runs from the top left, just past New Orleans, into the Gulf of Mexico at bottom left.

The Mighty Mississippi

Once it passes New Orleans, the Mississippi flows into the Gulf of Mexico. The rain that fell in Lake Itasca three months ago has reached the ocean. To do that, it has traveled the length of the United States. Someday, some of that water may return as rain to Lake Itasca. It may make the journey all over again. And again . . .

Glossary

| | |
|--|---|
| dams (<i>n.</i>) | barriers that stop the flow of water (p. 6) |
| floods (<i>n.</i>) | water that covers land that is normally dry, sometimes caused by too much rain (p. 12) |
| locks (<i>n.</i>) | gated sections in a river or canal in which the water level is raised and lowered to allow ships and boats to pass (p. 6) |
| mammals (<i>n.</i>) | warm-blooded animals with a backbones and hair or fur that nurse their young and have babies that are born live (p. 8) |
| Mississippi River (<i>n.</i>) | a major river in the United States that flows from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico (p. 4) |
| shipped (<i>v.</i>) | transported goods, especially by a large boat (p. 7) |

Photo Credits:

Front cover, back cover: © Nathan Benn/Corbis; title page: © Nathan Benn/Ottochrome/Corbis; page 4: © Ben Zastovnik/Dreamstime.com; page 6: © jferrer/iStock/Thinkstock; page 7 (top): © Scott Sinklier/Agstockusa/age fotostock; page 7 (bottom left, bottom center): © Nixken/iStock/Thinkstock; page 7 (bottom right): © mechanick/iStock/Thinkstock; page 8 (top): © Jared Hobbs/All Canada Photos/Corbis; page 8 (bottom): © Joel Sartore/National Geographic Creative; page 9 (main): © Byron Jorjorian/Science Source; page 9 (inset): © James Montgomery/JAI/Corbis; page 10: © Brian Murphy/Alamy; page 11: courtesy of NASA; page 12 (top main): © cosmin4000/iSotkc/Thinkstock; page 12 (top inset statue): © Jenny Bonner/iStock/Thinkstock; page 12 (top inset soil): © Andrey_Kuzmin/iStock/Thinkstock; page 12 (bottom): © Julie Dermansky/Julie Dermansky/Corbis; page 13: © Henryk Sadura/Tetra Images/Corbis; page 14 (top): © Louise A Heusinkveld/Alamy; page 14 (bottom): © PAULO SANTOS/Paulo Santos/Interfoto/Newscom; page 15: © Planet Observer/Science Source

Title page: A paddlewheel riverboat on the Mississippi River south of Memphis, Tennessee

The Mighty Mississippi
Level N Leveled Book
© Learning A-Z
Written by Caryn Swark

All rights reserved.

www.readinga-z.com

Correlation

| LEVEL N | |
|-------------------|----|
| Fountas & Pinnell | M |
| Reading Recovery | 20 |
| DRA | 28 |