

## Lesson One

### **Objectives:**

- Students will use the Mark Twain's Mississippi web site.
- Students will use the interactive map at the site as the basis for applying the five themes of geography: 1) place, 2) location, 3) region, 4) human interaction with the environment, and 5) human migration.
- Students will gather a variety of data from the map to fill out a chart related to the five geographic themes.
- Students will compare and contrast the North and the South along the Mississippi River using the geographic themes.
- Students will compare and contrast different decades related to the geographic themes to establish patterns of change over time.

### **Notes on the Lesson:**

This lesson is intended for history classes that have access to computers during class time so students can do research for the assignment.

### **Materials Needed:**

Students and teacher can access a brief introduction to the five geographic themes at <http://www2.una.edu/geography/statedepted/themes.html>.

Students and teacher will access the interactive map from the Mark Twain's Mississippi site at <http://atlas.lib.niu.edu/Website/twain/viewer.htm>.

Students will use the attached chart to fill in data from the map.

### **Time Required:**

Two 50-minute class periods will be needed and perhaps some time as homework to complete both accessing and investigating the interactive map and filling out the chart. An additional class period can be employed for student presentations on their findings and for discussion of patterns of change over time.

### **Introduction:**

The Mississippi River played not only a central role in the life of Mark Twain, but it also represents an ideal focal point for examining the five geographic themes in United States History, as well as patterns of change over time. By assigning different teams of students to different eras, the teacher will be able to help them recognize patterns of change economically, demographically, and culturally.

### **Assignment:**

1. Ask students if they recall the impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans. Encourage them to consider what features of the city made the hurricane so devastating, such as its low elevation and proximity to the Gulf of Mexico. Use this for a brief (about 20 minutes) overview of how and why New Orleans came to be such an important city in United States History. This should

be done using the five themes of geography. For example, though New Orleans presents several undesirable features as a PLACE for a city (such as swamps, mosquitoes, low elevation), its location at the mouth of the Mississippi River made it a coveted LOCATION for controlling trade to the interior of the continent. Other relevant points teachers can make regarding the city and its tie to the geographic themes:

- New Orleans acted as the locus of human MIGRATION along the river, often attracting those from different cultures and regions.
- The city became a leading symbol and center of the South as a REGION. Further, during the Civil War, both North and South considered control of the river vital to their economies and military strategies.
- The theme of HUMAN INTERACTION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT allows instructors to return to the issue of Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane reveals the difficulties of New Orleans's human layout and the efforts to control flooding through a system of levees.

For presentation of the geographic themes, teachers may consult the Web site listed above. Information on the geography of New Orleans can be found easily enough through a Web search; try the Wiki article at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Orleans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Orleans).

2. Tell students that they will now examine the same geographic themes by using an interactive map and filling out a chart. If instructors wish to introduce the historical thinking skill of change over time, they can divide the students into groups based on the decades indicated on the map. Teachers should be aware especially of the year 1860 as a dividing point between the ante- and postbellum periods. Student teams will choose one location from the North (the Illinois-Kentucky border can act as a convenient divider) and one from the South. By using the features of the map (such as railroads, photos, texts), students will be able to gather information about the two locations they have chosen.

3. Have students collect the data from the map on the chart below. The theme of migration encompasses both the Northern and Southern locations; students can consider the importance of the movement of goods, people, and culture as they compare and contrast the two locations they have chosen.

4. If the teacher has decided to employ the historical thinking skill of change over time, he/she should instruct students to complete the prompt at the bottom of the chart in which they make a 1-2 sentence conclusion about the major ways in which the Northern and Southern locations differ. A salient point that teachers should bring to students' attention is the existence of slavery in the South in 1860 and before and its abolition after this point.

5. To conclude the activity, student teams can briefly present their conclusions from each period (it may be useful to proceed in chronological order) and as much supporting data as time allows. As a final point, the teacher may offer, or solicit student input, on the importance of the Mississippi River as a geographic feature in the historical development of the United States.

## Lesson One: Interactive Map and Five Geographic Themes (Mark Twain's Mississippi)

	Place	Location	Interaction	Region	Migration
Northern Location Name:					
Southern Location Name:					

Prompt: Write one or two sentences on how the North and the South differed in this decade. DECADE: