



## Big River Journey Classroom Activity: Geography

# Map the Mississippi Watershed!

### Instructions for students:

**Use the map template “The Mississippi River and Watershed” and other resources to complete the following. Use another sheet for your answers.**

1. On the lower right corner of your map place an arrow that indicates which direction is north on the map. Put a capital “N” at the tip of the arrow. Add the letters S, E & W around the arrow to indicate the directions south, east and west.
2. Using a light green pencil, carefully outline the Mississippi Watershed on your map by following the dashed lines. Write “watershed boundary” neatly along this line.
3. Using a light blue pencil, carefully highlight the Mississippi River; neatly label it.
4. Where does the Mississippi River begin? Mark that place with a blue dot.
5. Place a red dot on your map where the Twin Cities are located.
6. Highlight the Minnesota River with a light yellow pencil, highlight the Missouri River with light brown, and the Ohio River in orange. Label each river.
7. Using other colors, neatly highlight at least two other rivers on the map that are tributaries to the Mississippi; label each river.
8. At what city does the Missouri River meet the Mississippi River? Mark that place with a pink dot on your map.
9. Make a “key” on your map to indicate what each colored line or dot represents.
10. Lay a string along the river, following all the river’s curves; cut or mark the string to the length of the river. Use the scale of miles at the bottom of the map to find the approximate length of the Mississippi River.
11. Generally, which direction does the Mississippi flow?
12. Label the body of water that the Mississippi River flows into on your map.
13. What tributary (stream or river) of the Mississippi River is your school closest to?
14. Name the states that have land along the Mississippi River. Write their two-letter postal code abbreviations (like “MN”) on each of those states on the map.
15. Use a pencil to darken the state boundary lines inside the Mississippi Watershed area. How many states do you count that contribute water into the Mississippi River?
16. Two Canadian provinces drain water into the Mississippi River. What are the names of these provinces?

## Map the Mississippi Watershed!

### Teacher Notes:

2. The Mississippi *Watershed* is all the land area that drains into the Mississippi River. On the map the watershed (or “basin”) boundary is indicated by the dashed line that encircles all Mississippi River tributaries.

4. By definition the Mississippi River starts at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota. However, it can also be said that the Mississippi River starts wherever rain or snow falls in the Mississippi Watershed, because water that flows from land anywhere in the watershed will eventually flow into the Mississippi River. (This is a good point for discussion.)

8. St. Louis

10. The length of the Mississippi River is approximately 2,350 miles. Student estimates will tend to be low using this method of measurement because it is impossible for them to follow all the river’s curves, many of which do not show up on this scale of map.

11. southward

12. Gulf of Mexico

13. Answers will vary with the school. Find the stream or river closest to your school that flows to the Mississippi River. Tell students that water running in your street flows to the river or a tributary of the river, too! In the Twin Cities area, all surface water flows to the Mississippi River.

14. Ten states border or include the Mississippi. They are: Minnesota (MN), Wisconsin (WI), Iowa (IA), Illinois (IL), Missouri (MO), Kentucky (KY), Tennessee (TN), Arkansas (AR), Mississippi (MS), Louisiana (LA).

15. There are 31 states whose waters drain to the Mississippi. From this map, it is difficult to count them all.

The 31 states are: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming, Wisconsin

16. Alberta and Saskatchewan

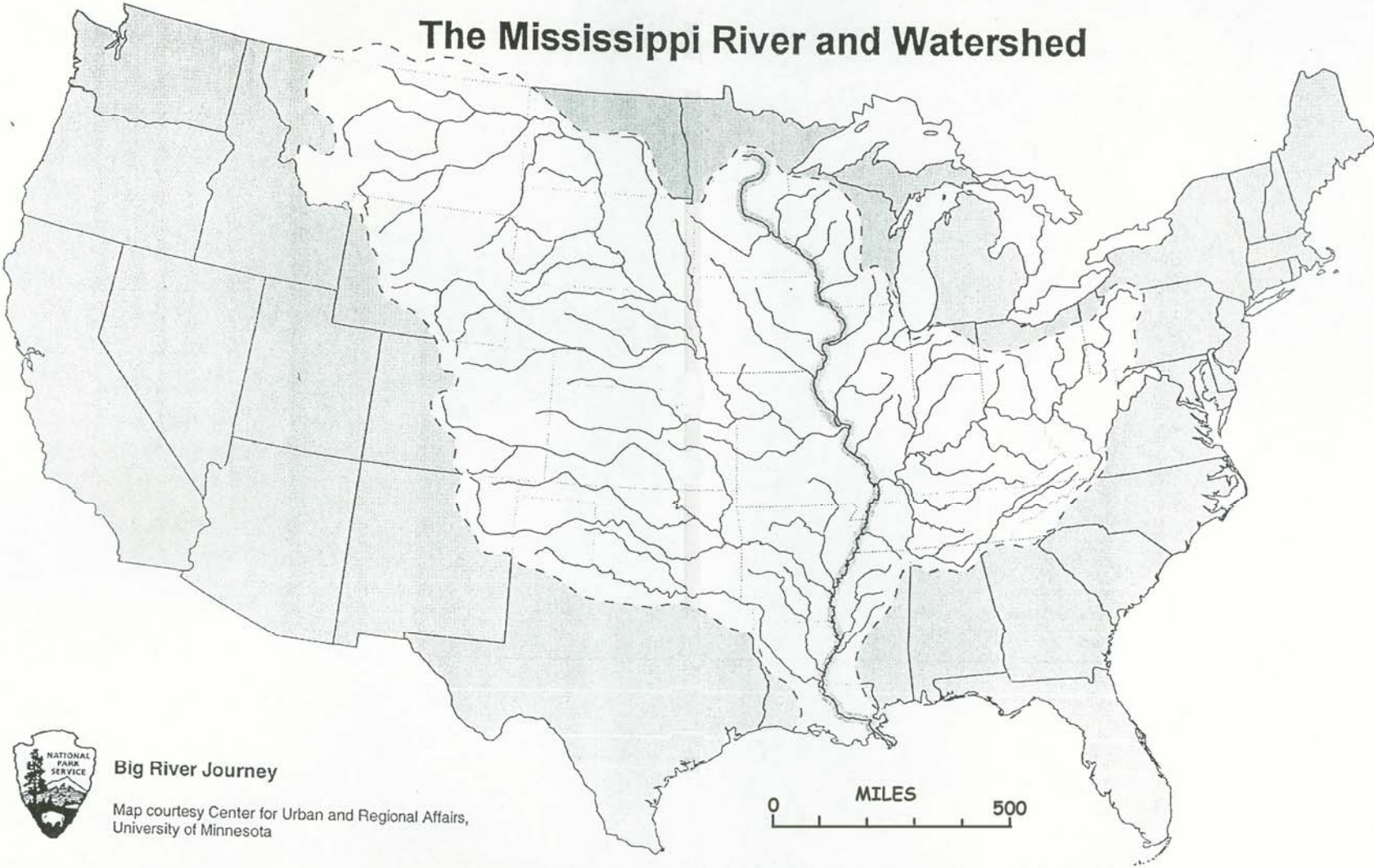
# The Mississippi River and Watershed



Big River Journey

Map courtesy Center for Urban and Regional Affairs,  
University of Minnesota

# The Mississippi River and Watershed



**Big River Journey**

Map courtesy Center for Urban and Regional Affairs,  
University of Minnesota