

## Red River Waterway Above and Below

- Grade Level:** 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>
- Goal:** The learner will have a greater appreciation of the Red River Waterway and the wildlife it supports.
- Objectives:** The learner will be able to illustrate a river ecosystem with the use of waxy colored pencils, crayons, watercolor paints or markers. The learner will practice still life, resist painting and shading while studying different forms of river life.
- Materials:** Waxy colored pencils or crayons, watercolor paints, magazines for pictures of different species of river wildlife, markers, paper sized 11x17 or larger, Red River Waterway video
- Time Allotment:** Timed sessions of 30 to 45 minutes over a five-day period
- Process:**
1. Teacher and students will watch the video and discuss the Red River Waterway and the abundant wildlife that it supports. Students will be given research time to find examples of native wildlife with the use of magazines and the internet.
  2. Students will make a list of all creatures inhabiting the Red River corridor. The teacher will post the list in the classroom and add more listings as they are discovered. The students will cut out examples of wildlife from magazines as well as print any examples that are found on-line. Students are encouraged to share examples. This activity concludes day one.
  3. The teacher will distribute one large sheet of medium weight drawing paper to each student.
  4. Orienting their paper horizontally, students will draw a single line using a blue crayon, colored pencil or marker. The line should enter the left margin and extend all the way across the paper. The line should be approximately one hand width from the bottom of the page and run the entire horizontal dimension. The teacher will stop here to explain that the line represents the Red River. The teacher may then allude back to wildlife that lives along the River's bottom from the previous day's discussion. Continue the lesson by instructing students to draw more lines like the first near the bottom of the page using brown, black and yellow crayons, colored pencils or markers. The teacher will stop here to explain how a riverbed changes over time with silt deposits, layers of sediment, water level fluctuation and erosion. This activity concludes day two.
  5. The students will evaluate the list of wildlife created on the first day. With the help of the teacher, they will determine where in the River's ecosystem each creature lives.

6. Modify the list of all creatures inhabiting the Red River corridor by labeling each animal according to their habitat: bottom habitat (mud and sediment layer), lower habitat (vegetation along the River bottom), mid habitat (main channel) and top habitat (surface).
7. Using the photos for reference, the students will draw contour outlines (do not fill with color) of Red River wildlife. Students will locate each drawing on their page according to that creature's habitat. See step 6. This activity concludes day three.
8. Using watercolor paint or markers, the students will color each creature using the photos for reference. Using their original lines as guides, the students will create the "sediment" representing the River bottom by slowly building thin, overlapping layers of watercolor paint or markers. Again using their original lines as guides, the students will fill in the water using the same "layering" technique outlined above. The students should concentrate on building up pigment from darkest (bottom layer) to lightest (top layer) either by adding water to thin the paint or by varying the pressure with which they are coloring. The student can use any remaining time to create additional environmental habitat, such as vegetation. When complete, the picture should resemble a cross section of the Red River and its wildlife. The page should be darkest at the bottom and lighten as you move up.
9. The students will blot their pictures dry with paper towels to add texture, interest and reveal resist from crayon or waxy colored pencil.
10. Allow the pictures to dry.

**Evaluation and Enrichment:**

1. The student will mount their pictures centered on black or dark construction paper sized 15 x 21 or larger. The teacher will display all "matted" artwork for the school or classroom's appreciation.
2. The student will write an essay on his or her favorite Red River animal and its habitat. The teacher may combine all essays into a booklet or classroom newsletter.
3. The teacher may schedule a classroom visit to the nearest Red River Waterway recreation area. The teacher may discuss conservation methods, wildlife and their habitats or the importance of River quality to commerce and recreation. The students may make field sketches of local flora and develop a rich color palette derived from nature. The classroom may want to picnic for lunch.