Zaner-Bloser

NEXT GENERATION ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

English Language Arts / Literacy

Student Edition

Grade 6

Informative/Explanatory

STRATEGIES FOR writers

Name _____ Date _____

PART I: Close Reading

Your Task

You will examine three sources about unrestrained logging and conservation. Then you will answer three questions about what you have learned. In Part 2, you will write an argument essay about whether or not you think people should be allowed to cut down entire forests.

Steps to Follow

In order to plan and write your argument essay, you will do all of the following:

1. Examine three sources.
2. Make notes about the information from the sources.
3. Answer three questions about the sources.

Directions for Beginning

You will have 35 minutes to complete Part I. You will now examine three sources. Take notes because you may want to refer to them while writing your argument essay. You can re-examine any of the sources as often as you like. Answer the questions in the spaces provided.

From
River Roads West: America's First Highways

Steamboats Rolling on the River

Before the days of the steamboats, traveling downstream on the Mississippi was fairly easy. River crafts drifted along on the steady current. The people steering the keelboats and rafts, however, had to be on constant watch for snags and islands, and deadly fog could threaten any trip. Giant eddies captured boats, spinning them like tops. Sawyers—whole trees that had fallen from a riverbank and become anchored in the river's bottom—were dangerous underwater obstacles. The sawyers seesawed up and down, ripping open any boat unlucky enough to come upon one.

Traveling upstream meant poling against the Mississippi's mighty current. This work was so hard that one Frenchman wrote: "One might as well try to bite a slice off the moon."

River travel on the Mississippi dramatically changed with the coming of the steamboat in 1811. The distinction of being the first steamboat on the Mississippi River belongs to the *New Orleans,* also the first steamboat on the Ohio. After navigating the Ohio, the *New Orleans* steamed into history on the Mississippi when it lowered its gangplank at New Orleans on January 10, 1812. Despite the hardships, dangers, earthquakes, and adventures, the maiden voyage of the *New Orleans* was a success. It had turned the Mississippi into a true river road running through the middle of America.

Within ten years, hundreds of steamboats paddled their way up and down the Mississippi. People and products moved swiftly from place to place. The city of New Orleans grew rapidly. By 1840 New Orleans was the fourth-largest port in the world, competing with mighty New York to handle the nation's commerce. That year, two thousand steamboats docked in New Orleans, carrying cargo worth more than fifty million dollars.

Not everyone traveled willingly on the Mississippi. Many African American slaves were forced to be on the river. Slaves stoked the fiery boilers on steamboats, loaded and unloaded cargo, and cared for passengers. Some African Americans were brave slaves who had run away from their owners, been captured, and sold to new masters down the river. Being "sold downriver" meant being sent down the Mississippi into the deep South, where escape to freedom in the North was nearly impossible.

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Danger on the River

Travel by steamboat was faster but not always safer. Fire was a constant danger. In order to be fast, early steamboats were built of light wood, which easily burst into flames from sparks flying out of the boats' chimneys. Steam boilers, used to power the paddle wheels, sometimes blew up, killing passengers and sinking vessels.

The worst steamboat disaster occurred on April 27, 1865. More than 2,500 people were aboard the *Sultana.* Most were Union soldiers returning home from the Civil War. Just after passing Paddy's Hen and Chicken islands near Memphis, the *Sultana* exploded. Despite valiant rescue attempts, 1,550 soldiers lost their lives.

Racing on the River

Owners cashed in on the speed of their boats. Faster boats meant they could charge higher prices for transporting people and products. Although many owners prohibited their boats from racing, proud captains often couldn't resist the temptation of a river race.

The contest held between the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee* is one of the most famous riverboat races. These competing steamboats usually traveled the 1,200-mile route from New Orleans to St. Louis on alternate days. Thomas Leathers, captain of the *Natchez,* challenged Captain John Cannon of the *Robert E. Lee* to a race. Both men knew the winner would have bragging rights on the Mississippi for years to come.

The race began at about 5:00 p.m. on June 30, 1870. The *Robert E. Lee* immediately took the lead. The speedy *Lee* steamed into St. Louis at 11:25 a.m. on July 4, making the journey in three days, eighteen hours, and fourteen minutes—a new record. The *Natchez* gave the race its best effort but finished more than six hours behind.

Mark Twain, Mississippi Storyteller

Before he became a famous American author, Mark Twain was a Mississippi steamboat pilot. His river tales made the Mississippi popular worldwide. Twain, born Samuel Clemens, grew up in Hannibal, Missouri, a small Mississippi River town. When he decided to pick a unique name for himself as a writer, Samuel Clemens remembered the leadsman calling out the Mississippi's changing depths, "Half twain! Quarter twain! Mark twain!" From then on, Mark Twain and the Mississippi were linked together forever.

In his book *Life on the Mississippi,* Twain said this about a glass of muddy Mississippi water: "Every tumblerful of it holds nearly an acre of land ... If you will let your glass stand half an hour, you can separate the land from the water ... you

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will find them both good: the one good to eat, the other good to drink. The land is very nourishing, the water is thoroughly wholesome."

Mark Twain made his reputation telling Mississippi River tales. Many other folks also had tales to tell about the mighty, misty, muddy, mysterious, maddening, magical, mean, meandering, musical, murky, messy, magnificent, mystical, mythical Mississippi.

How did steamboats change life on the Mississippi? Give at least four facts and concrete details to support your answer.

From
Steamboats

Mark Twain, Steamboat Pilot

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, one of America's greatest writers, is tightly linked to the Mississippi and steamboats. He was born in Florida, Missouri, in 1835 and grew up in nearby Hannibal, a Mississippi River town where steamboats regularly stopped. Even the pen name by which he is generally known—Mark Twain—has a steamboating origin, dating from his early years as a river pilot. This was a calling then as admired by young boys as railroad engineer would be for the next generation and astronaut is today. Clemens loved the river and aspired to work on it.

When he was twenty-one, Clemens met Horace Bixby, a Mississippi River pilot, and convinced Bixby to take him on as an apprentice. Two years later he was a licensed pilot, a king of the river, guiding the majestic, tall-stacked steamboats—his childhood dream. Unhappily, this career was truncated barely two years later when the Civil War caused the suspension of civilian river traffic on the Mississippi. But by this time, Clemens had found the inspiration for his pen name, which he would adopt a few years later when working as a newspaperman in the silver-mining country of Nevada.

Since the Mississippi is a shallow river for much of its length, running aground has been a concern since the earliest days of steamboating. In an era long before such electronic devices as sonar, water depth was checked by a leadsman who stood in the boat's bow and flung a rope weighted with a lead-filled pipe into the water. The leadsman noted the "mark" on the rope when the pipe touched bottom and "sang the mark" to the wheelhouse. The second mark on the rope, or "mark twain," indicated water 2 fathoms (12 feet) deep, enough for safe passage.

Mark Twain recounted his years as a steamboat pilot in *Life on the Mississippi,* a combination of memoir and travel book. His two most famous novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* are set in a river town modeled on Hannibal. Much of the latter book takes place on a raft, as Huck and Jim, an escaped slave, float south on the Mississippi, a "monstrous big river," in Huck's words, but one where you could "feel mighty free and easy and comfortable."

What are two facts that might tell us why Mark Twain successfully wrote about life on the Mississippi?

From
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

It was a monstrous big river down there—sometimes a mile and a half wide; we run nights, and laid up and hid daytimes; soon as night was most gone we stopped navigating and tied up—nearly always in the dead water under a towhead; and then cut young cottonwoods and willows, and hid the raft with them. Then we set out the lines. Next we slid into the river and had a swim, so as to freshen up and cool off; then we set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about knee deep, and watched the daylight come. Not a sound anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering, maybe. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t'other side; you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness spreading around; then the river softened up away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; you could see little dark spots drifting along ever so far away—trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks—rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by and by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in a swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log-cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, being a woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh and sweet to smell on account of the woods and the flowers; but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars and such, and they do get pretty rank; and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it!

A little smoke couldn't be noticed now, so we would take some fish off of the lines and cook up a hot breakfast. And afterwards we would watch the lonesomeness of the river, and kind of lazy along, and by and by lazy off to sleep. Wake up by and by, and look to see what done it, and maybe see a steamboat coughing along up-stream, so far off towards the other side you couldn't tell nothing about her only whether she was a stern-wheel or side-wheel; then for about an hour there wouldn't be nothing to hear nor nothing to see—just solid lonesomeness. Next you'd see a raft sliding by, away off yonder, and maybe a galoot on it chopping, because they're most always doing it

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on a raft; you'd see the axe flash and come down—you don't hear nothing; you see that axe go up again, and by the time it's above the man's head then you hear the *k'chunk!*—it had took all that time to come over the water. So we would put in the day, lazying around, listening to the stillness. Once there was a thick fog, and the rafts and things that went by was beating tin pans so the steamboats wouldn't run over them. A scow or a raft went by so close we could hear them talking and cussing and laughing—heard them plain; but we couldn't see no sign of them; it made you feel crawly; it was like spirits carrying on that way in the air.

Jim said he believed it was spirits; but I says: "No; spirits wouldn't say, 'Dern the dern fog.'"

Soon as it was night out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water, and talked about all kinds of things—we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us—the new clothes Buck's folks made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides I didn't go much on clothes, nohow.

Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. Yonder was the banks and the islands, across the water; and maybe a spark—which was a candle in a cabin window; and sometimes on the water you could see a spark or two—on a raft or a scow, you know; and maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from one of them crafts. It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened. Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to *make* so many. Jim said the moon could a *laid* them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against it, because I've seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the stars that fell, too, and see them streak down. Jim allowed they'd got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.

Once or twice of a night we would see a steamboat slipping along in the dark, and now and then she would belch a whole world of sparks up out of her chimbleys, and they would rain down in the river and look awful pretty; then she would turn a corner and her lights would wink out and her powwow shut off and leave the river still again; and by and by her waves would get to us, a long time after she was gone, and joggle the raft a bit, and after that you wouldn't hear nothing for you couldn't tell how long, except maybe frogs or something.

What are at least five sensory details that Mark Twain uses to tell about life on the Mississippi?

PART 2: Writing to Multiple Sources

You will now have 70 minutes to review your notes and sources, plan, draft, and revise your research report. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. You may also refer to the answers you wrote to questions in Part I, but you cannot change those answers. Now read your assignment and the information about how your research report will be scored; then begin your work.

Your Assignment

Your assignment is to write a research report on the geographical and historical setting of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Explain how the steamboat changed life on the Mississippi River. Describe Samuel Clemens' personal experiences on the Mississippi and point out where he drew on these experiences in his writing. Discuss the sensory details the author chose to bring the setting to life. Be sure to provide an introduction and a conclusion and use concrete details that support your explanations. Your teacher and your classmates will be your audience.

Research Report Scoring

Your research report will be scored on the following criteria:

I. **Focus and organization**—How well did you clearly state your topic and preview what is to follow? How well did your ideas flow logically using effective transitions? How well did you provide a concluding section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented? How well did you stay on topic throughout the report?

Continued

Research Report Scoring (continued)

2. **Elaboration of evidence**—How well did you develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples? How well did you use comparison and contrast or cause and effect? How well did you effectively express ideas using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary that was appropriate for your audience and purpose?
3. **Conventions**—How well did you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

Now begin work on your research report. Manage your time carefully so that you can

- plan your report.
- write your report.
- revise and edit for a final draft.

Spell check is available to you.

Type your response in the space provided on the following page. Write as much as you need to fulfill the requirements of the task; you are not limited by the size of the response area on the screen.

Type your response below.

Go to the next page if you need more space.

Continue your response below.

