

# Illinois

## Alliance-Created State Giant Traveling Map Lesson

**Title:** Rolling Down the River (River Convergence)

**Recommended Grades:** 4-5

**Time Needed:** 45 minutes

**Objectives:**

- Students will be able to use symbols to recognize major Illinois Rivers.
- Some rivers serve as natural borders.
- Students will understand that rivers connect and can feed into one another, creating larger rivers.

**Materials:**

One River Card per Team (Fox River, Kankakee River, Rock River, Illinois River)

**Preparation:** None

**Rules:**

- Shoes are not allowed on the map. Please have students remove shoes before walking on the map.
- No writing utensils or sharp objects on the map.

**Directions:**

Students will engage in a short introduction activity to discover the quantity of rivers in Illinois. Next, they will search for rivers and their tributaries by playing a relay game. In the last activity they will simulate how rivers flow or converge into one another. Choose the activities that best suit your students' current understandings of rivers.

**Activity 1: Oh so many Rivers!**

Invite students to take off their shoes and walk around on the map. Ask them to find a body of water and stand on it. Tell them to move again and find another body of water to stand on.

Ask the following questions to lead them to understand Illinois has many rivers:

- What type of body of water are you standing on? Why did you choose it?
- How many people are standing on a Lake? Ocean? River?
- What do you notice about our state and its water resources?

**Activity 2a: Rivers and Tributaries Relay**

1. Instruct the students to find a partner and line up along the Mississippi River. Explain this is the largest river and that it serves as a natural western border of our state.
2. Explain the term *tributary*.
3. Tell students they will explore rivers with their partner until they find a river with a tributary to a larger river that is a tributary to a larger river.

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4. Assign students partners or let them choose partners. They must decide who is Partner A and who is Partner B.
5. Ask Partner A to find a river. Next, tell Partner B to join their partner and together they should follow the river. If it connects with a smaller river, they have found its tributary and they should high five and choose a colored dot to stand on in the corner of the map.
6. If the partnership does not find a river that has a tributary they must return to the Mississippi River. Instruct Partner B to choose a river. Again the pair will travel and look to see if it has a tributary.
7. The game continues until all partnerships find a river with a tributary and have joined a colored group. (note: you may want to have a limit of the number of partnerships for each corner so that the class is equally distributed for the next activity)

### Activity 2b: River Convergence Simulation

This activity is similar to the game Red Light Green Light. When the teacher says “flow,” the teams will slowly move along their river route, when the teacher yells “stop” all students stop moving. Students may need some guidance in blending their lines or rivers.

1. Explain to students you will now play a game that will show us many rivers can connect. Explain the term confluence, the meeting of two bodies of water.
2. Review cardinal directions with students by having them point to North, South, East and West.
3. Each team receives a River card and will line up along that river when the teacher calls their team color. This is their starting point.
4. Once all the students are lined up tell them they are acting as the water, or current, of the river. They will move slowly (you may want to use the term “baby steps”) towards the West.

#### **Red Team**

Starts on Fox River and will join the Illinois River and then the Mississippi River

#### **Blue Team**

Starts on the Rock River and will flow into the Mississippi

#### **Yellow Team**

Starts on the Kankakee River and flows into the Mississippi

#### **Green Team**

Starts on the Illinois River and flows into the Mississippi

5. Call out “Flow” and “Stop” until all students have converged into the Mississippi. As rivers begin to join you may need to let students know that the river is getting bigger, they need to merge or co-mingle with the other river.

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6. Ask students the following questions:
- What was happening along the Illinois River?
  - Which River is the largest, why do you think so?

You may have to point out that the Fox River converged with the Illinois River. The Illinois River then converged with the Mississippi. The meeting place of two rivers can be described as the convergence of the Illinois and the Mississippi.

*Tip.* You may want to have only half of the class do this at a time by calling all students who were Partner A to go first. Partner B should be observing and ready to report out about what they see.

*Alternate Version.* You might have students use a color yarn. They could lay the yarn along their river. The different colors would connect into the Mississippi and give them a visual of the convergence of rivers. The same length of yarn can be used to estimate the distance of rivers using the scale.

*Standards:* Geography Standard 7: The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth's surface. (4th grade)

### Vocabulary:

- Tributary: A river or stream flowing into a larger river or lake
- Convergence: The meeting of two or more bodies of water