STUDIO FIELDNOTES / ARTS INTEGRATION / 6–8

The River as a System Map

Teacher guide · 6–8 · 50–65 minutes × 3–5 sessions

Essential question

How do choices upstream change what happens downstream?

Why this investigation matters

Trace water movement, built structures and environmental impacts

The finished work

Annotated visual systems map with three linked human decisions

Methods and material suggestions

river network, land use, cause and effect; choose materials suitable for your space: drawing and collage materials, paper, water-based media, or clean reclaimed objects as appropriate.

Learning targets

Students will: analyze a relevant visual or disciplinary source; experiment with river network, land use, cause and effect; create an original response; give and use evidence-based feedback; and explain one artistic choice.

Teaching progression

01 / Engage

Show the inquiry question: How do choices upstream change what happens downstream? Invite a noticing, a wonder, and an initial interpretation.

02 / Investigate

Examine relevant diagrams, data and field observations. Trace water movement, built structures and environmental impacts Students annotate the evidence that supports their thinking.

03 / Skill Studio

Demonstrate river network, land use with a short material experiment. Students test the technique and record what changes.

04 / Generate

Produce at least two distinct visual approaches to the challenge. Compare how each communicates the idea.

05 / Plan

Choose an approach, identify materials and sketch a sequence of actions. Name one foreseeable difficulty.

06 / Produce

Create the original artwork or design: Annotated visual systems map with three linked human decisions. Photograph or annotate work in progress.

07 / Critique

Use evidence-based peer feedback: one element that communicates, one question, one suggested next move.

08 / Revise

Make one visible revision in response to critique or new evidence. Record before-and-after choices.

09 / Present

Display or share the result with a student-authored explanation and credits for research sources.

10 / Reflect

Return to the inquiry question and explain what the work now communicates, what changed and what could improve next time.

Standards and adaptation

Visual Arts Creating/Connecting plus Geography and Earth Science reasoning; adapt core standards to the exact course and grade level.

Do not substitute artistic polish for accuracy of evidence; assess each discipline separately.

Differentiation and access

Offer visual exemplars, tactile or large-print materials, verbal/audio explanations, partner brainstorming, alternate motor tools, and choice in subject matter. Require comparative source annotations, a documented materials test, two design alternatives, and a critique-led revision.

Teacher checks

Before: Ask students to answer: How do choices upstream change what happens downstream? Record a drawing, annotation or discussion response.

During: Look for purposeful use of river network and a clear link between research evidence and design choices. Ask students to explain an alternative.

After: Compare first plan and revised result; collect a student statement naming one choice, one change, and the evidence that motivated it.

Source and representation care

Research original works using the cited museum or artist resources. Do not imply the supplied editorial cover graphic depicts the artist or their copyrighted artwork. Credit creators and seek permissions for reproductions. Check the relevant core-content standards and source accuracy before teaching.