

In 1900, Chicago's government did something very bold. They changed the direction of the Chicago River. Until 1900, the river flowed into the lake.

Chicago started as a small town. But it grew to a great city. In 1890, there were 1 million people living here. By 1900, just ten years later, there were 600,000 more people here. The river was polluted. Factories dumped trash into it. Sewers drained into it. Because the river flowed into the lake, people were getting sick. The lake was getting polluted. People got their drinking water from it.

Chicago has a history of bold planners. Chicago leaders made a plan. They would turn the river back. It would flow the other way. Then they would send the pollution away from the lake. It was a big job. They had to dig a canal to move the water the other way. They had to put a wall across the river where it met the lake. Then they would be able to lower the water in the river and pull the lake water out.

They did it. They build the wall, called a lock. They were ready to move the river the other way. But the people of St. Louis heard about the plan. They were worried. They knew that the pollution would come their way. The river would reach the Mississippi River, which flows by St. Louis. It would bring pollution to them.

Chicago has a history of bold leaders. The mayor decided to go ahead with the project. The mayor of St. Louis was fighting the plan. He was angry. So were citizens of St. Louis. But the bold Chicago leaders went ahead with their plan. They knew it would be important to Chicago.

Early one morning on January 2nd, 1900, Chicago leaders took shovels to the place where the river would join the new canal. They dug at the place between the river and the canal. They found it was too big to do with shovels, so they used dynamite. Still it would not work. They were very worried. It might not work. Then they used a big machine called a dredge. It pulled out the last big pieces of earth. Then the water rushed backwards. They had reversed the river. The leaders cheered.

Once it was done people of Chicago marveled. The citizens cheered the mayor. And the people of St. Louis complained. Only later would people figure out how to stop pollution before it got into water. Today, Chicago filters its waste. But the river will always go the other direction. Once reversed, it would be very difficult to put back.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. How did the people of St. Louis feel about the leaders of Chicago?

- a. friendly
- b. angry
- c. sorry
- d. grateful

2. How did the people of Chicago feel about the mayor?

- a. happy
- b. hopeful
- c. proud
- d. sorry

3. The leaders of Chicago knew it was hard to change nature. Why did they try?

- a. They cared about the city.
- b. They wanted to show off.
- c. They did not like St. Louis.
- d. They were brave.

4. How did the Chicago leaders feel when the mayor of St. Louis wanted them to stop their plan?

- a. embarrassed
- b. disappointed
- c. confident
- d. angry

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*
Why was this change important to people in Chicago?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	c	a	c

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. It would get them healthier. They had changed nature.

In school we learned about the earth. We learned that rivers flow from higher ground to lower ground. They usually end at a bigger river or go into a lake or ocean. I can see that every day in Chicago. Our river goes into the lake. It's a giant lake.

We used to go fishing on the river every summer. Most days you would find me and my grandfather there, fishing. My father was busy working for the city. I did not know what his job was. He said it was in the Sanitary and Ship Canal. He left early each morning and came home at night, always very dirty.

My grandfather would take me to the river. We'd sit all day and catch fish. I would listen to my grandfather tell about the times he had when he first came to Chicago. He had built our home by himself. "In the old days," he said, "This was a clean stream. "Now look at it. It is filthy."

That day was the end of our fun. We would see boxes floating by. Sometimes we even saw dead fish floating on it. When we brought the fish home, my mother would throw them out. "We can't eat this. This is dirty, bad fish." She sounded angry. But I thought she really liked my grandfather.

So my grandfather and I stopped bringing the fish home. Sometimes we would go to fish and throw them back. But mostly we just stayed at home. We were sad about it.

Then one Christmas my father was so busy he was not home. He even went to work on Christmas day. That New Year's day he worked, too. My mother was worried. "It is too cold." But he went anyway.

Then two days later the newspaper said, "It is a miracle!" That was the headline. I read the article. It told how the workers on the Sanitary and Ship Canal had done something impossible. They had reversed the Chicago River. They dug such a great hole that the river rushed away from the lake. It now went to the west. Now you could go on the river and canal all the way to the Mississippi River.

I was excited. So was my grandfather. He said, "Now we can go fishing this summer." We both laughed. So did my mother. My father smiled a lot, all day long.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

6. How does the child feel about his grandfather?

- a. sad
- b. fond
- c. angry
- d. proud

7. Why does the mother worry about her husband?

- a. The weather was cold.
- b. It was dangerous.
- c. She loved him.
- d. He took chances.

8. How does the father feel about his work.

- a. dedicated
- b. tired
- c. hopeful
- d. helpful

9. Why did the father smile so much?

- a. It was funny.
- b. He was proud.
- c. His family laughed.
- d. His father liked him.

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*

How do you think the grandfather felt about his son? Why?

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Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	6	7	8	9
Answer	b	c	a	b

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. The grandfather was proud of his son because he had done something very important.