

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.

Identify, analyze, and infer relationships – Nonfiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

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

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.

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

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

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