

Reversing the Chicago River

CCSSR2. Determine **central ideas** of a text and analyze their development; **summarize** the key supporting details and ideas.

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. Then Chicago leaders changed it.

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 great history of people who figured out ways to solve problems so the city could grow. 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. Rivers flow naturally in one direction. This would change nature. 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. 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.

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. Brave Chicago leaders changed nature to help the city grow.

Which is the best main idea of this passage? Underline the parts of the text that support your choice.

- Chicago changed the river.
- People have solved important problems to improve the city.
- Chicago grew a lot from its beginning.