

**Answer Key**

Great Blue Heron



# The Mississippi River

**T**HE MISSISSIPPI RIVER is probably the most famous river in America. The Mississippi River runs from Minnesota and ends in the Gulf of Mexico, and was the main transportation route of the United States for many years. The Mississippi and the Missouri Rivers join to form the longest river system in the U.S. and the fourth longest in the world. Its name comes from *misiziibi*, an Ojibwe word that means “Big River.”

“The Mighty Mississippi” starts small – in a little lake in Minnesota called Lake Itasca. It moves on to meander past several major American cities – Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans – bringing them water and hydroelectric power for their homes and businesses. Several other major rivers feed into it, like the Missouri and the Ohio Rivers. Though most people estimate it to be around 2,300 miles long, no one can agree on how long the Mississippi actually is!

The area around the Mississippi is one of the country’s best agricultural regions, with farmers depending on the water and the minerals it brings to nourish their crops. The Mississippi is also home to several species of fish and waterfowl that thrive on it.

## FACT FILE

Name: The Mississippi River Length: Estimate is around 2,300 miles

Source (where it starts): Lake Itasca, Minnesota

Mouth (where it ends): The Gulf of Mexico

Cities Along It: Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, Baton Rouge, New Orleans

Tributaries (rivers or streams that feed into it): Missouri River, Ohio River

Importance to Communities Near It: Source of water and hydroelectric power for homes and businesses, provides water and minerals for crops in agricultural regions