

**MISSISSIPPI HUMANITIES COUNCIL
JOURNEY STORIES**

Title of Lesson/Unit: *Back to the Future: The Mississippi Journey*

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School: Arts Consultants

Grade Levels: 4-7 and 8-12*

Primary Subject: A reader theater's experience about Mississippi's historical journey.

* Elementary students may perform with posters; high school students should do more research and use a power point presentation of pictures showing BEHIND the risers; they may perform the reader's theater **FOR** younger students.

BIG IDEA

What overarching understandings are desired?

Understandings:

We have powerful journey stories in our personal heritage.

People move for many reasons—greater freedoms and safety, new economic opportunities, to escape current situations.

All of us are immigrants.

There are winners and losers in migration stories.

DESIRED RESULTS

What standards (knowledge and skills) will students attain as a result of this unit/study?

Social Studies Competencies:

4th grade: 1. a. – d; 5. a and b; 7. a. and b.

5th grade: 1. a. – d.; 7. b.

6th grade: 1.a.

8th grade: 1. b. and d.; 4. a.; 8. a.

9th grade: 1. e.; 3. a., b., and c.

10th grade: 1. c.; 3.a., c.; 4. b.

11th grade: 2.c.; 3.a.

12th grade: 5.d.

Theatre Competencies:

1. Demonstrate ability to create improvisation and scripted scenes based on a personal experience, heritage, imagination, literature and history.

7. Explore history and multicultural concepts through dramatic activity.

Language Arts Competencies:

(4th through 9th grade)

1. Student will express, communicate, evaluate, or exchange ideas effectively through planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (sharing).
(a. – f.)

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What questions will focus this unit?

Essential Questions:

Why do people move?

Who were the winners and losers in our country's migration stories?

What happens when people claim a place?

How has the view of immigration changed over time?

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

What evidence will be used to show that students understand?

(Performance Tasks, Projects, Quizzes, Tests, Academic Prompts, Observations, Work Samples
Dialogues, and Student Self-Assessment)

1. Students research pictures, predict, analyze, and take on personaand draw or use a power point for the reader's theater production.
2. Students participate in a reader's theater experience.
3. Students perform the reader's theater piece for an audience.

Resources needed: Drum (may be the bottom of a pan); a small piece of a large chain to make a sound OR students whisper "IN CHAINS"; poster board & signs drawn by students (or do a power point to show above); white paper OR butcher paper and colored pencils or markers for quick draw; internet to play songs.

Prerequisites: none

Approximate time to spend on lesson components: Three 45-minute sessions

Learning Plan

- Students will...
Read the assigned parts of the reader's theater dialogue using emotion with understanding.
- Teacher will assemble the students like a choir on risers or in divided sections of the classroom, so all faces can be seen.

Chorus 1	Chorus 2	Chorus 3	Chorus 4
Traveler 1	Traveler 2	Traveler 3	Traveler 4
Traveler 5	Traveler 6		
Railroad man 1	Railroad man 2	Railroad man 3	Railroad man 4

*** High school students could perform this for the younger grades while showing a power point using the pictures in the resource file and add others through research.**

Reader's Theater Script

PART A: All are sitting at the beginning...

Traveler 1: A mobile people in a vast land;
(traveler 1 is sitting in the center of the group of students representing Chorus 1; student stands and spreads arms as s/he speaks)

Chorus 1: Some of us were here already,
(far left group, stand, look and turn to chorus to the LEFT, then speak in unison)

Chorus 2: Some of us came hoping for a better life,
(middle left group, stand, look to RIGHT, then speak in unison)

Chorus 3: Some of us came in chains.
(middle right group, stand, look to RIGHT)

Chorus 4: And all of us are still in motion. (Sway to right & left; after a moment, others all stand and join swaying)

ALL: We all have Journey Stories....

ALL sit... **MUSIC “Sacred Ground” (see resource file)**

http://www.last.fm/music/David+R.+Maracle/_/Sacred+Ground?autoplay Play in background

Traveler 2: Powerful stories (stand, one drum beat)
(The person beating the drum may be a member of the chorus or the traveler.)

Chorus 1: For many it was a ONE WAY TRIP

Traveler 3: From the beginning of time (stand, one drum beat)

Chorus 2: Even before this country was named America, our country was a mobile land.

Traveler 4: (Stand) By 12,000 years ago, people now called Natives, which means ‘one of the first people to live on a land,’ arrived in this country, walking across the Bering Strait land bridge, paddling along the Pacific coast, or possibly sailing across the Pacific (or even Atlantic) Ocean. Some of these early travelers eventually settled in Mississippi.

Traveler 5 & 6: (Stand) We were here first. (one drum beat) By 1650, 30,000 Native people lived in our state of Mississippi.

Traveler 1: (Stand) The largest group was the Choctaw. (raise right hand, 2 beats)

Traveler 2: (Stand) The next was the Chickasaw, (R fist over heart, 3 beats)

Traveler 3: (Stand) And the third was the Natchez. (fists beat fists, 4 beats)

CHORUS 3: AND SMALLER TRIBES...THE TUNICA, THE BILOXI, THE PASCAGOULA (1 BEAT)

Travelers
4, 5, & 6: (Stand) We had much in common. We all farmed and spoke similar languages AND TRADED UP AND DOWN THE Mississippi River and Gulf Coast.

Chorus 4: (Stand) We are the Natchez people. 1,500 of us settled along the MS River with the rich farmland where the city of Natchez is now located. We designed a calendar with 13 moons based on the food we could grow and hunt. (hold up sign, picture of moons, beat fists while speaking)

Chorus 1: (Stand) We are the Chickasaw. We are warriors, fighting for land. We are hunters and fishers. There were 8,000 Chickasaw in 1650. We settled in northern MS between the MS River and the Tombigbee near Tupelo. (Chickasaw sign, picture of hunters, R hand over heart while speaking)

Chorus 2: (Stand) We are the Choctaw. 15,000 of us lived in villages in central and southeastern MS, as far west as the Pearl River and as far south as the Piney Woods. We are farmers and a peaceful people...(Choctaw sign, picture of Piney Woods, R hand raised while speaking)

- Chorus 3: (Stand) We all built our villages close to streams and creeks where the land was easier to farm. (hand movements of a river/stream)
- Chorus 4: (Stand) Native American civilizations were well established before colonists came across the oceans. (6 beats) (ALL CHORUSES SIT NOW)
- Traveler 1: (Stand) I am DeSoto, the first European to visit Mississippi with my Spanish troops. We brought horses and hogs to the land and we searched for gold and silver. (hold Spanish flag, picture of horses and hogs)
- Traveler 2: (Stand) One story tells that DeSoto and his men shared bacon with the natives, but when the soldiers refused to give them more, the natives turned the hogs loose.
- Traveler 1: Some of the wild hogs of MS today are descendants of those freed hogs from my journey.
- Traveler 3: (Stand) DeSoto spent time with the Choctaw (R hand raised)
- Traveler 4: (Stand) And the Chickasaw. (hand over fists)
- Traveler 5: (Stand) And in 1542 DeSoto got sick with malaria and died. (One beat, Desoto turns around with back to audience, then sits after traveler 6 speaks))
- Traveler 6: (Stand) His men were afraid of what the Indians might do if it were known that their leader was dead, so they tied stones to his body and sank him in the mighty Mississippi River.

Chorus 1: The Spanish did not return.

Chorus 2: They did not find gold or silver.

Traveler 1: (Stand) But there was an important result of my exploration.

Traveler 2: An increase in the spread of diseases from the Spanish to Native Peoples.

Chorus 1: Because we had no immunity.

Traveler 3: Fifty percent of the Native population was destroyed within 100 years, but not before we fought each other: the Choctaw with the French (a member of chorus 2 stands up with a French flag); the Natchez and Chickasaw with the English. (a member of Chorus 4 and Chorus 1 stand & hold up the English flag together)

Chorus 2: And all of us are still in motion. (Sway to right & left; after a moment, others all stand and join swaying)

ALL: We all have Journey Stories....

PART B: Many motives

Chorus 2: We came as explorers (stand, face middle)

Chorus 3: As colonists (stand, face middle)

Chorus 4: As indentured servants (stand, face middle)

Chorus 1: As slaves (stand, face middle)

- Traveler 4: We came by ships to an unknown land.
- Traveler 5: Some against their will; some in search of religious freedom, opportunities, wealth, or adventure.
- Traveler 6: Some set out voluntarily
- Traveler 1: And others were forced to leave their homes.
- Travelers 2: Sometimes we were greeted by native peoples onshore
- Travelers 1, 2, 3: And sometimes we were forced
- Traveler 1: ...to claim land,
- Traveler 2: to fight for land,
- Traveler 3: to die or kill...
- Traveler 4, 5, 6: for a place in the new world.
- Traveler 4: After Desoto, the French were the next Europeans to come to Mississippi.
- All: They came down the mighty Mississippi River.**
- Traveler 5: ...to build the fur trade
- Traveler 6: ...to introduce Christianity
- Traveler 1: ...to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean.
- Traveler 2: ... to claim the new land for the King of France.

Traveler 3: French explorer LaSalle told the King:

Traveler 4: “The land is very fertile, the climate is very mild, and a port or two would make us masters of the whole of this continent!”

Traveler 5: Others came through the Gulf of Mexico looking for the great river.

Traveler 6: I am D’Iberville. I sailed through the Gulf of Mexico and came upon an island where natives had been massacred. Today it is Dauphin Island. My crew and I sailed on until we came upon what I thought was a ship. It was not a ship, but the island now is called Ship Island. We explored Deer Island and the areas around Gulfport and Ocean Springs.

All travelers: By the end of the 1600s, a French colony and forts were established along the Mississippi River.

Chorus 3: And all of us are still in motion. (Sway to right & left; after a moment, others all stand and join swaying)

ALL: **We all have Journey Stories....**

PART C: Many Came in Chains

Chorus 1: **(Stand)** Hundreds of thousands from Africa came to America by force—as slaves. Slavery became a crucial part of the economies of most American colonies, north and south.

Traveler 1: The French settlers tried to force the native people

of MS to live in slavery, but they rebelled.

ALL: IN CHAINS... (whisper)

Traveler 2: So, the French government gave permission to bring enslaved people from Africa.

PLAY Song: See resource file for “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

ALL: IN CHAINS... (whisper)

Traveler 3: The first Africans to come to the Mississippi area landed on Dauphin Island.

ALL: IN CHAINS... (whisper)

Chorus 2: By 1724 there were 5,000 Europeans and 1,300 Africans in the colony.

ALL: IN CHAINS.... (whisper and echo)

Traveler 4: By 1798 many settlers came to the MS Territory.

Traveler 5: They wanted the land

Traveler 6: They took the land.

Chorus 3: They developed the land.

Chorus 4: They settled in Natchez, Columbus, Biloxi, and Vicksburg.

Traveler 1: They came on foot.

- Traveler 2: They came by wagon.
- Traveler 3: They came downriver by flatboat. (hold up a picture of a flatboat)
- Traveler 4, 5, 6: But the river's current was too strong to go upriver.
- Traveler 1: SO... the pioneers traveled the Natchez trace between Natchez and Nashville on foot, horseback, or wagon.
- Traveler 2: By 1811 steamboats were used.
- Traveler 3: The steamboat was like a racehorse compared to the slow and clumsy flatboat.
- Traveler 4: The steamboat could travel 240 miles from Vicksburg to New Orleans in only two days.
- Traveler 5: 80-100 boats a day would carry the growing trade on the River Highways, including the Mississippi, the Ohio, the Tennessee, and others.
- Traveler 6: Townspeople worked on the docks
- Traveler 5: as storekeepers
- Traveler 4: as traders
- Traveler 3: and many African Americans were put to work on the steamboats (hold up a picture/poster of a steamboat)
- Chorus 4: African Americans named the Mississippi, "Old Man River."

Chorus 3: Old Man River is the longest North/South flowing river in North America.

Chorus 4: And all of us are still in motion. (Sway to right & left; after a moment, others all stand and join swaying)

ALL: We all have Journey Stories....

SONG SING "OLD MAN RIVER" (The entire group can sing, or a soloist may be used or you may play the song from the resource file from the internet.)

PART D: Expanding Boundaries

ALL: Mississippi became the 20th state in 1817.

Chorus 2: Natchez was the first capital.

Chorus 1: Then it moved a little north to Washington

Traveler 1: then to Columbia on the Pearl River

Traveler 4: and finally to LeFleur's Bluff, renamed Jackson in honor of General Andrew Jackson.

Traveler 2: Like Columbia, Jackson was located on the Pearl River, too,

Traveler 6: chosen because it was in the middle of the state and close to a river

Chorus 2: making it less difficult to reach from different parts of the state.

- Traveler 5: The constitution gave only white men certain rights—
- Traveler 1: first to those with money and property—
- Traveler 2: then to all white men.
- Traveler 6: Rights were not granted to women
- Traveler 3: to African Americans
- Traveler 4: to Native Americans.
- Traveler 5: In the 1830s Mississippi’s population swelled to almost 400,000 people, from settlers from the eastern states
- Chorus 3: Also the number of enslaved people tripled.
- ALL: IN CHAINS... (whisper)
- Chorus 4: And Mississippi thrived with slave labor.
- ALL: CHAINS... (whisper)
- Traveler 2 It was during this time that some enslaved Africans fled northward in search of freedom on the Underground Railroad. **Play “Wade in the Water,” (a song coded to let slaves know when it was safe to travel north). See resources file.**
- Traveler 3: When by 1839, MS produced the most cotton in the country, a new form of transportation – the

railroad powered by steam— (hold up a picture of a steam-powered railroad engine)

Traveler 6: called the Iron Horse—

Traveler 3: connected cotton plantations

Traveler 1: and carried goods to the river routes and beyond.

ALL: Cotton was KING! (picture of a cotton field)

Chorus 4: The demand for land increased,

Traveler 5: so Mississippi leaders decided that Native Americans living on more than half the land would be forced to move from Mississippi...

Chorus 2: Choctaw (raise right hand while speaking)

Chorus 1: and Chickasaw (right hand over heart)

Chorus 3: were forced to move to ‘Indian Territory’ on the

ALL: TRAIL OF TEARS

Chorus 2: And all of us are still in motion. (Sway to right & left; after a moment, others all stand and join swaying)

ALL: We all have Journey Stories....

Play the song listed in resources called “Trail of Tears.”

Teacher READS: From *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter, Chapter 6 “To Know the Past.”

****Invite audience to do quick draws as excerpt is being read. The drawings may be done individually on paper or on the wall on butcher paper as a mural or collage. A quick draw is sketching what comes into your mind as the text is being read.****

* Assign TWO people to read every other paragraph... seat them in old rocking chairs, if possible.

Grandma and Grandpa wanted me to know of the past, for “If ye don’t know the past, then ye will not have a future. If ye don’t know where your people have been, then ye won’t know where your people are going.” And so they told me most of it...

How the government soldiers came. How the Native people had farmed the rich valleys. How their harvest festivals were held in the villages as frost turned the pumpkins, reddened the persimmon and hardened the corn. How they prepared for the winter hunts.

How the government soldiers came, and told them to sign the paper. Told them the paper meant that the new white settlers would know where they could settle and where they would not take land of the native people. And after they had signed it, more government soldiers came with guns and long knives fixed on their guns. The soldiers said the paper had changed its words. The words now said that the native people must give up their homes. They must go far toward the setting sun, where the government had other land—land that the white man did not want.

How the government soldiers came, and ringed a big valley with their guns, and put the native people in the ring...like cattle.

After a long time of this, when they had most of the native people, they brought wagons and mules and told them they could ride to the land of the setting sun. The native people had nothing left. But they would not ride, and so they saved something.

You could not see it or wear it or eat it, but they saved something; they would not ride. They walked.

The native men walked and looked straight ahead and would not look down, or at the soldiers. Their women and their children followed in their footsteps and would not look at the soldiers.

The empty wagons rattled and rumbled and served no use. The wagons could not steal the soul of the native people. The land was stolen from them, their homes, but they would not let the wagons steal their soul.

As they passed the villages of the white man, people lined the trail to watch them pass. At first, they laughed at how foolish were the native people to walk with the empty wagons rattling behind. Soon the laughter stopped.

As the native people walked farther from their home, they began to die. The soul did not die, nor did it weaken. It was the very young and the very old and the sick.

At first the soldiers let them stop to bury their dead, but then, more died—by the hundreds—by the thousands. More than a third of them were to die on the Trail. The soldiers said they could only bury their dead every three days, for the soldiers wished to hurry and be finished with this journey. The soldiers said the wagons would carry the dead, but the native people would not put their dead in the wagons. They carried them...walking.

The little boy carried his dead baby sister, and slept by her at night on the ground. He lifted her in his arms in the morning, and carried her.

The husband carried his dead wife. The son carried his dead mother, his father. The mother carried her dead child. They carried them in their arms. And walked. And they did not turn their heads to look at the soldiers, nor to look at the people who lined the sides of the Trail to watch them pass. Some of the people cried. But the native people did

not cry. Not on the outside, for they would not let them see their souls—as they would not ride in the wagons.

And so they called it the Trail of Tears. Not because the native people cried, for they did not. They called it the Trail of Tears for it sounds romantic and speaks of the sorrow of those who stood by the Trail. A death march is not romantic...and you cannot sing a song of all that happened. And so they called it The Trail of Tears.

STOP MUSIC.

Students share quick draws and reactions.

Teacher asks:

From whose perspective was this account given?

How might the Trail of Tears be remembered from the perspective of a soldier? The President? Etc.

ALL: We all have Journey Stories....

Traveler 6: With most of the Native Americans removed through the ‘forced journey,’ expansion and connections were easier.

Traveler 2: The railroad was much faster than the stagecoach.

Traveler 3: It took 12 hours to travel between Jackson and Vicksburg by stagecoach...and cost \$12.

Traveler 4: But with the railroad it took 2 ½ hours to make the same trip...and cost only \$2.

Traveler 5: Trains were faster and more powerful.

Traveler 1: They could be dangerous, too. Casey Jones is remembered as a railroad engineer who was killed when his passenger train collided with a stopped freight train at Vaughan, MS, in Yazoo County (north of Jackson).

ALL: That night, April 30, 1900, was foggy and rainy and Casey Jones tried to stop his train and save lives. He alone was killed. He alone is remembered as a brave railroad man.

SONG *Casey Jones* (play from the internet; see resource sheet for the “Ballad of Casey Jones”)

All: Did you know...

(This would be an excellent place to show power point slides with the maps showing the lines moving from city to city.)

Railroad man 1: By 1910 there were 4,506 miles of railroad tracks in Mississippi

RR person 2: Connecting Vicksburg to Meridian

RR person 3: Natchez to Jackson

RR person 4: Greenville to WestPoint

ALL: Biloxi, Holly Springs, Tupelo, and Yazoo City

RR persons 1-4: Connecting MS to Memphis, Chicago, and New Orleans

ALL: And now there are more than 70,000 miles of paved roads,

plus 18 rail lines and numerous ports on the MS River and Gulf of Mexico.

ALL: And did you know...

Traveler 5: From 1915-1920, 100,000 African Americans left MS in what was part of the Great Migration.

Play this Blues song:

[http://www.nutsie.com/song/Dark%20Was%20the%20Night%20\(Cold%20Was%20the%20Ground\)/7136063?artist_id=1007831&album_id=7136056](http://www.nutsie.com/song/Dark%20Was%20the%20Night%20(Cold%20Was%20the%20Ground)/7136063?artist_id=1007831&album_id=7136056) **“Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground” by Blind Willie Johnson**

Traveler 4: Journeying from the south to cities in the Northeast ...New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore

Traveler 3: and to the Midwest to Chicago, Indianapolis, and Detroit

ALL: with the hope and promise of better jobs and education.

ALL: Did you know...

(Good place to show a map of Europe showing Southern and Eastern Europe on power point or posters.)

Traveler 2: There were waves of immigration to the U.S. from Western Europe during 1840—1900

Traveler 1: And immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe from 1900—1910 to the U.S.

- ALL: What a rich merger of cultures we have in our state...
- Traveler 6: African American Blues and Jazz
- Traveler 5: Jewish theatre, music, and religion,
- Traveler 4: and strong influences from the Irish and their determination and work ethic, and the Chinese and their entrepreneurship.
- Traveler 3: But FEAR of “differences in religions and cultures” from those who journeyed and settled America before the Revolution produced acts to limit immigration.
- Travelers 1-2: QUOTAS...favoring those from northern and Western Europe, and limiting those from southern and Eastern Europe
- Travelers 3-4: and excluding those from Asian ancestry.
- Traveler 5-6: It was not until after the 1970s that less discriminating immigration laws opened the door to greater numbers of Hispanic and Asian people.
- ALL: Now we in Mississippi are...
- Traveler 5: a tapestry of African American
- Traveler 4: European American
- Traveler 3: Native American
- Traveler 2: Asian

Traveler 1: and Hispanic.

ALL: We are...MISSISSIPPI
 We are a part of the JOURNEY STORIES...and it's
 been quite a ride!
 ...*We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life.*
 How could we tire of hope...and tolerance...and peace?
 SO MUCH is yet to COME...and BLOOM!
 * *Poem* "Beginners," poem by Denise Levertov

Travelers 1-6: A mobile people in a vast land

Traveler 1: Some of us were here already

Traveler 2: Some of us came hoping for a better life

Traveler 3: Some of us came in chains...

ALL: **And all of us are still in motion. (sway)**
 We all have Journey Stories....

* See the MHC Resources file for pictures and songs.