

Observing the River

Rivers have many different features that make them unique. For each question below, mark an X on the bar to measure the characteristic listed.

How fast is the river?



How wide is the river?



What type of environment is the river in?



Circle any of these river features you see!

- waterfall
- lake
- cliffs
- river bend (meander)
- streams
- islands
- rapids
- marsh
- rocky riverbed

Which river stage do you think you are observing? Use your observations above and descriptions in the inside of this brochure to write a guess below.

Water Colors

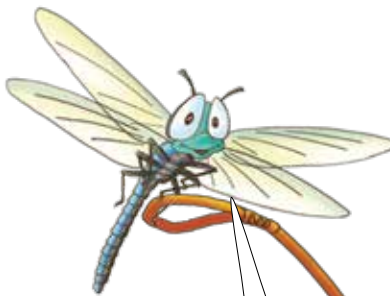
The color of a river can be caused by a number of things, from sediments and minerals in the water to even the water's speed. Fast water over rocks tends to be bluer than slow water in marshy places.

Circle the color that best matches the color of the water you see.

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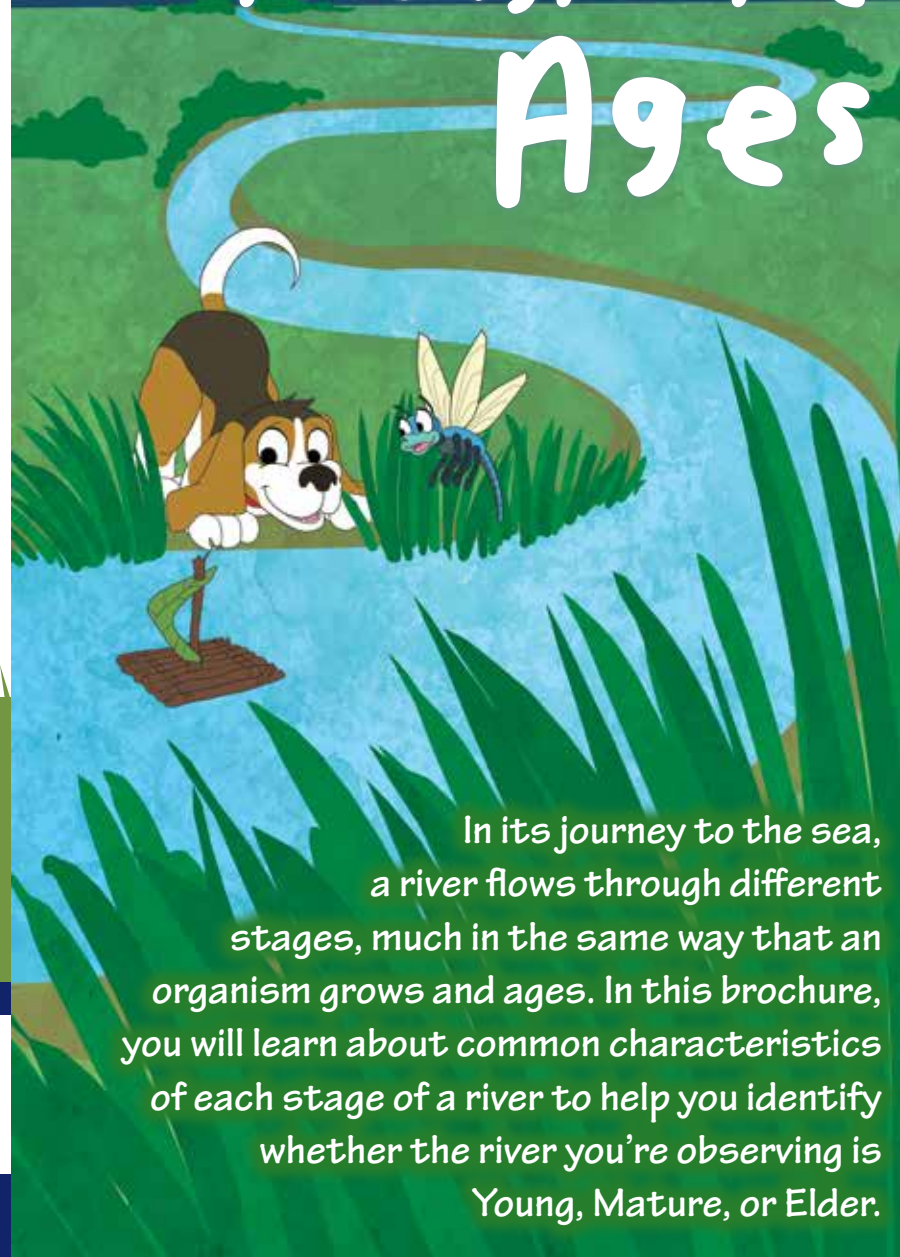
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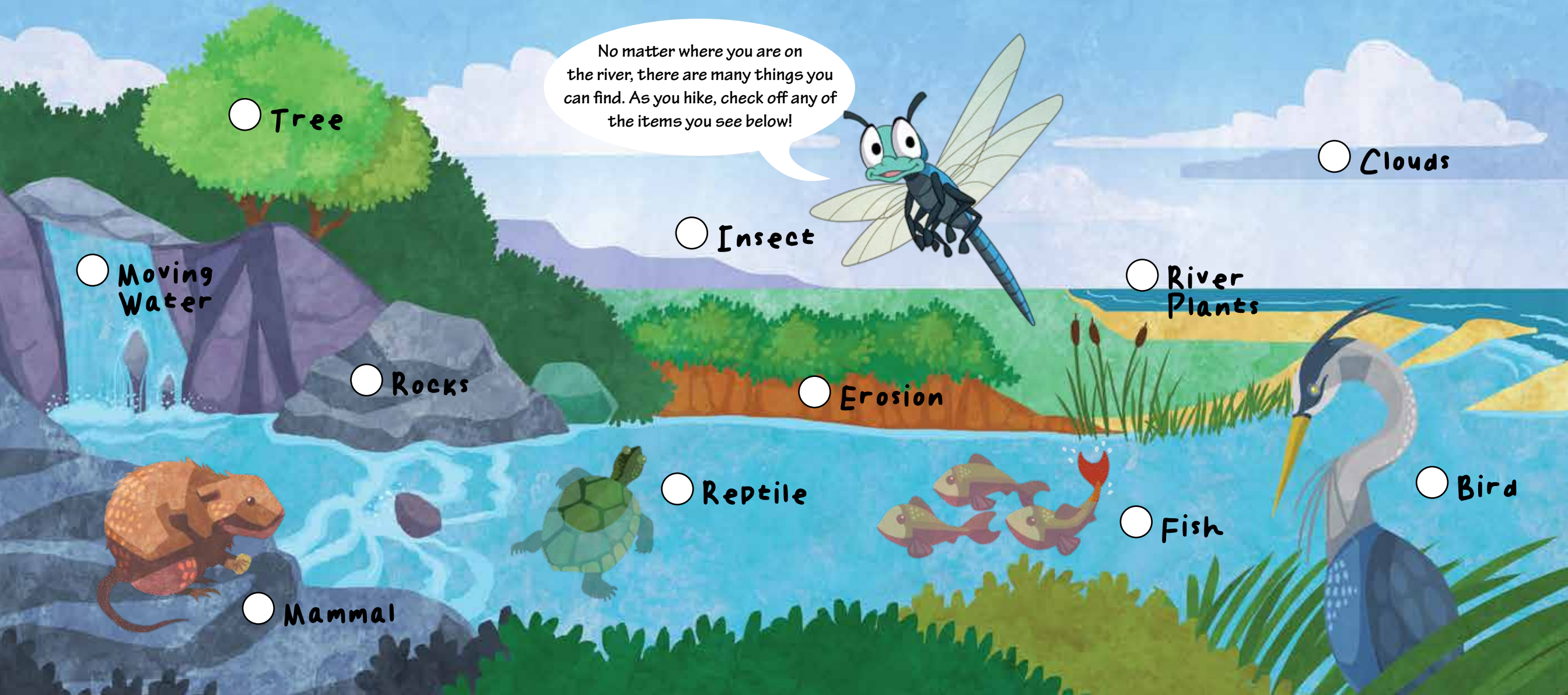
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Rivers through the Ages



In its journey to the sea, a river flows through different stages, much in the same way that an organism grows and ages. In this brochure, you will learn about common characteristics of each stage of a river to help you identify whether the river you're observing is Young, Mature, or Elder.



Tree

No matter where you are on the river, there are many things you can find. As you hike, check off any of the items you see below!

Clouds

Moving Water

Insect

River Plants

Rocks

Erosion

Reptile

Fish

Bird

Mammal

Youthful River
Fast and strong, youthful rivers are the beginning stage of a river. Usually found in higher elevations, such as the mountains, these rivers are narrower and tend to be deeper than they are wide. Water flows down steeper slopes, giving the river enough speed to move all sizes of sediments, including boulders. The youthful river also features rapids and waterfalls as it carves away soft rock, leaving cliffs of hard rock behind. Water in the youthful river often comes from collections of rainfall.

Mature River
This is the middle stage of the river. Here, the land surrounding the river becomes less steep, causing the river to slow down in speed. The slower water loses its ability to carry large sediment, allowing more stones and gravel to drop into the riverbed. These deposits of large material build up over time to force the mature river to meander, or follow a winding path, as it flows. The mature river also begins to grow wider as it gathers waters from youthful rivers, other mature rivers, and other sources of water.

Elder River
Slow and steady best describes the elder river. In this final stage of the river, the water flows down a very shallow slope, and becomes wider than it is deep. Elder rivers spread as they gather more water from multiple sources. The water moves fast enough to move sediment, like silts and clays, but is slow enough that this sediment often floats, giving the water a muddy appearance. The elder river often splits into many channels as it flows out into the sea, and floodplains and marshes are present.