

RESTORING A RIVER

Study Guide

Use the book, *A River Ran Wild* by Lynn Cherry and online resources (keyword search terms: Nashua River, Nashaway people, Nashua River today, Marion Stoddart) to complete this study of volunteer efforts to restore the heavily polluted Nashua River.

1. The Nashua River

- Where is it? How long is it? _____
- What river does it feed into? _____
- Print a copy of the map of the river in the early 1900s, found in the book or online. With a marker, trace the river on the map, from its source to the Merrimack. Find a map of the United States and locate the river on it.

2. Native Americans Living with the River

- When did native people reach the Nashua River Valley? _____
- What did they call the river? _____
- How did the Nashaway people use the river? _____

- What wildlife lived in and by the river? _____

3. Colonists Arrive

- The colonists who settled by the Nashua came from what country? When? _____
- How did they use the river? _____

- What happened to the Native Americans there? _____

4. Ruining the River

- How did the Industrial Revolution affect the river? _____

- What happened to the river's natural current, which had always kept the water flowing and clean? _____

- What happened to animals that depended on the river? _____
- In the 1960s, the Nashua River was declared _____.

RESTORING A RIVER

Study Guide

5. Restoring a River

- Describe the “dream” Oweana shared with his friend, Marion Stoddart. _____

- Was it actually a dream? What did it inspire Marion to do? _____

- Describe the campaign Marion waged to clean up the river. When did it begin? What did Marion and the other volunteers do? _____

- What was the Nashua River like in 1992, when Lynn Cherry's book was published? _____

- What is it like today? _____

- What agency watches over and protects it? _____
- Is Marion Stoddart still alive? How has her work as a “citizen leader” been shared and rewarded? _____

6. **Reflect on what Marion Stoddart, with a host of like-minded volunteers, accomplished.** Now imagine yourself as a “citizen leader.” If you could gather around you a group of dedicated volunteers, what cause would you champion? What would you do? Write a newspaper article you’d like to see as a factual report of the result of your efforts to make the world better.

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1. The Nashua River

- Where is it? How long is it? **In Massachusetts and New Hampshire. About 38 miles.**
- What river does it feed into? **The Merrimack River.**
- Print a copy of the map of the river in the early 1900s, found in the book or online. With a marker, trace the river on the map, from its source to the Merrimack. Find a map of the United States and locate the river on it.

2. Native Americans Living with the River

- When did native people reach the Nashua River Valley? **Perhaps seven thousand years ago.**
- What did they call the river? **Nash-a-way, "River with the Pebbled Bottom."**
- How did the Nashaway people use the river? **They fished in it, used the floodplains to grow crops, and drank from it.**
- What wildlife lived in and by the river? **Salmon and other fish, muskrats, turtles, deer, owls, raccoons, beaver, wolves.**

3. Colonists Arrive

- The colonists who settled by the Nashua came from what country? When? **England, in the mid-1600s.**
- How did they use the river? **They fished, swam, built sawmills powered by the current, built dams to store water, and used it to transport lumber. Later, they built paper and textile factories next to it.**
- What happened to the Native Americans there? **The colonists claimed the river and surrounding land; the Nashaway fought for their way of life, but they were gradually driven away.**

4. Ruining the River

- How did the Industrial Revolution affect the river? **Wood pulp from the paper mills and dye and fiber from the textile mills were dumped into the water, along with chemicals and plastic waste.**
- What happened to the river's natural current, which had always kept the water flowing and clean? **It was slowed by dams and by pollutants that clogged the river.**
- What happened to animals that depended on the river? **They grew sick and died.**
- In the 1960s, the Nashua River was declared **Ecologically dead.**

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Study Guide

5. Restoring a River

- Describe the “dream” Oweana shared with his friend, Marion Stoddart. Oweana “dreamed” that the spirit of Weeawa, chief of the native people who first settled by the river, returned and saw the river polluted and lifeless. He cried, and his tears cleaned the water where they fell.
- Was it actually a dream? What did it inspire Marion to do? No, it was an allegory, or symbol, of the vision and hope Oweana and Stoddart shared that the river could be clean and healthy again. It inspired Stoddart to take action.
- Describe the campaign Marion waged to clean up the river. When did it begin? What did Marion and the other volunteers do? It began in 1962. Stoddart visited towns along the river and gave speeches. She gathered many helpers. They cleaned up trash on the riverbank. They talked to legislators, sent them jars of dirty water, circulated petitions, and wrote letters to ask legislators to make laws to regulate industries and protect the river. They recruited business people to convince the industries to build waste treatment plants.
- What was the Nashua River like in 1992, when Lynn Cherry’s book was published? It was clean and fresh-smelling again. You could see the pebbles on the bottom. The current ran freely. Animals returned to drink and make homes in and around it, and people again used it for swimming and boating.
- What is it like today? There are still industries along the river, but it is used for recreation, including swimming. It is part of a wildlife management area and a national wildlife refuge.
- What agency watches over and protects it? Nashua River Watershed Association.
- Is Marion Stoddart still alive? How has her work as a “citizen leader” been shared and rewarded? Yes (as of December 2014). The Nashua River Watershed Association, which she founded, is a model for environmental protection. She’s won many awards, including the United Nations Environment Programme’s Global 500 Award, in 1987. She was profiled in a 1995 issue of *National Geographic* magazine and was honored in 2009 by the National Women’s History Project.

6. **Reflect on what Marion Stoddart, with a host of like-minded volunteers, accomplished.** Now imagine yourself as a “citizen leader.” If you could gather around you a group of dedicated volunteers, what cause would you champion? What would you do? Write a newspaper article you’d like to see as a factual report of the result of your efforts to make the world better.