

Lesson 8

A Tour of the Midwest

Why do we call the Midwest “America’s Heartland”?



Introduction

Let's take a tour of the Midwest. On this tour, you will learn about the economy of the Midwest, including how people make, use, and manage goods and services in the region. You will also explore its geography and learn about its colorful history.

Have you had a meal with corn or beef before? The food may have come from midwestern farms. You will see some of the land used for crops and livestock. You will learn what makes the Midwest ideal for farming and how farming shaped the region's economy. You will also find out how farming drew people to the Midwest.

Over the course of this tour, you will visit nine stops. You will see great monuments, open spaces, an engineering solution to a problem, factories and towns, airports, and even a shopping mall. Along the way, look for answers to this question: How did this one region earn these two very different nicknames—“America's Breadbasket” and “America's Heartland”?

You are now ready to explore the Midwest. Our first stop will be in Missouri, nicknamed the “Show Me State.”

Farms, such as this one in Iowa, can be found across the Midwest.

Vocabulary

assembly line

feedlot

fertile

frontier

livestock

meatpacking

prairie

reservation

transportation hub



The Midwest Region



Corn, Wheat, Milk, and Milk Products in the Midwest



Preview Activity

Activity
Online

Label this map of the Midwest with the answers to the Geography Challenge questions. Include the number of the Geography Challenge in front of each answer.



0 150 300 miles
0 150 300 kilometers

Vocabulary Activity

Activity
Online

Fill in the blanks with terms from the Word Bank to complete this photo journal of the Midwest.

Vocabulary Word Bank

assembly line

livestock

transportation hub

feedlot

meatpacking

fertile

prairies

frontier

reservations



In the 1700s, the Midwest region was _____ land that had rarely been explored by Europeans. Great Britain ceded this land, filled with rolling _____ of grasses and wildflowers, to the United States government in the 1783 Treaty of Paris.

Settlers soon moved into what was referred to as the “Old Northwest.” The Native American tribes were forcefully moved onto _____ by the government so the _____ soil could be used by White settlers to grow crops and raise animals.



Today, _____ such as cattle, hogs, and chickens are raised by farmers to provide food. Each farm contains a _____, an area where livestock are fattened for slaughter. Once killed, the process of _____ can begin.

The meat is separated and moved along an _____ to be packaged. One worker cuts the meat, another weighs it, and another packages it. Then the meat products are brought to a _____. From there, they are shipped in refrigerated trains to be delivered all around America.



Hands-On Activity



Explore the Midwest on this self-directed tour and collect clues to reveal a secret word.

Directions: Tour the Midwest

1. **With a partner, get ready to explore nine locations in the Midwest.**
2. **At your first stop, skim the section of text that corresponds with that stop.** Read with a writing utensil in hand. Highlight anything that will help you answer the focus question.
3. **Answer the focus question in your Activity Notes.**
4. **Find the hidden letter and record it in your Activity Notes.**
5. **Repeat Steps 2–4 to complete all nine stops.** You will need to complete every section to reveal the saying about the Midwest.



1. St. Louis, Missouri: Gateway to the West

Welcome to St. Louis, Missouri, and its Gateway Arch. St. Louis is your first stop because of its history. This was also the first stop for many people who were traveling west to settle.

St. Louis began as a **frontier** town. The frontier was a region of wild country, unexplored by Europeans. French traders were the first people to settle in St. Louis. They chose this spot because it is near two mighty rivers, the Mississippi and Missouri. These rivers come together just north of St. Louis.

Pioneers were the first Americans to settle the West. Many of these pioneers started their journey by heading west from St. Louis. This is why St. Louis is called the “Gateway to the West.” The Gateway Arch was built to honor those pioneers. It is a proud reminder of St. Louis’s history.

The Gateway Arch is one of the most famous arches in the world. Made of gleaming stainless steel, it rises about 630 feet above the Mississippi River. Visitors can ride a tram inside it to the top. The cars are small and the ride is bumpy, but the view from the top is great! You can see for miles around and even spot other famous landmarks.

This is the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. It is a memorial to the pioneers who helped settle the West.

2. The Farm State of Iowa

Your next stop is a farm in Iowa. Iowa is known for agriculture and has more than 80,000 farms. What makes this state great for farming?

Iowa began as a **prairie** land. A prairie is an area of flat or rolling land covered mostly with tall grasses. Iowa's flat prairies make it ideal for farming. When farmers moved to Iowa in the 1800s, they plowed the grass and planted crops such as corn, grains, and potatoes.

Farms should also have **fertile** soil. The word *fertile* means "able to produce good crops." Iowa has so much fertile soil that farms cover almost all of the state.

Finally, farms should be near good transportation. Iowa lies between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Before there were trains, Iowa farmers used these rivers to send their crops to market across the nation.

Today, Iowa farms produce huge crops of corn, soybeans, and oats. Much of this harvest is fed to **livestock**. Livestock are animals raised on farms, such as cattle, hogs, and chickens. Iowa farm products are used in all kinds of foods. In fact, the chances are good that the next bag of popcorn you pop was grown on an Iowa farm just like this one.

The state of Iowa has fertile soil for its many farms. The Midwest grows many different types of food that we use every day.



3. Dodge City, Kansas: Where the Cattle Once Roamed

Welcome to Dodge City, Kansas. Kansas—a land made up of mostly flat plains—has long been famous for wheat and cowboys.

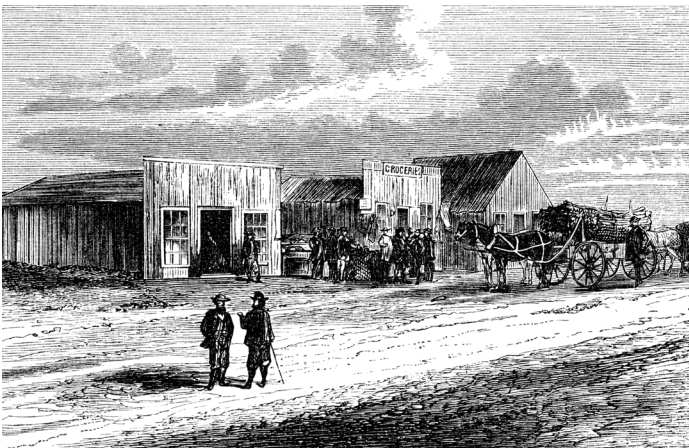
The plains of Kansas make it a wonderful place to grow wheat. In fact, Kansas produces more wheat than any other state. If you travel through Kansas in the early summer, you will see mile after mile of golden wheat.

Back in the 1870s, cowboys from Texas used to herd cattle across the Great Plains to Dodge City. Herding cattle was dusty, smelly work. Cowboys spent months away from home during cattle drives. When the cattle finally reached Dodge City, they were loaded onto trains and shipped east for sale.

Today, fewer cattle graze on the plains. Cattle are mostly raised on a **feedlot**. Feedlots are areas or buildings where livestock are kept while being fattened for slaughter. Dodge City is home to some of the biggest **meatpacking** plants in the country. Meatpacking is the preparation of meat for sale. It's an important industry in the Midwest.

Dodge City is nicknamed the “Cowboy Capital of the World.” Some people still work as cowboys today, but they likely go home at the end of the day. You can still visit sites from the Old West in Dodge City.

Dodge City's streets were once filled with horses, wagons, and cattle. Today, the streets look much different.





Mount Rushmore National Memorial honors four American presidents.

4. South Dakota's Heroes

Two huge monuments are carved into the Black Hills of South Dakota. The first is Mount Rushmore National Memorial. It shows the faces of four American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. Each head is six stories tall.

The second monument honors a Native American man named Crazy Horse, who was chief of the Oglala tribe. It is still being carved into the Black Hills today. When it is finished, the Crazy Horse Memorial will be the world's largest statue.

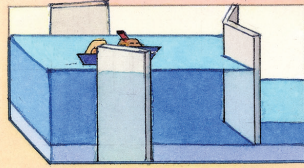
The Black Hills are sacred to the Native Americans who lived in this region. When White settlers moved into the area, they began pushing Native American tribes off their land. Native Americans fought back to keep their homeland. This struggle led to war with the United States.

During that war, a military leader named George Custer attacked a group of Native Americans who were camping by Little Bighorn River in Montana. Crazy Horse led his warriors into battle. Soon, Custer and his men were dead.

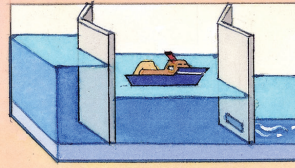
Despite this victory, Native Americans had most of their land taken from them over time. Many Native American tribes, such as the Oglala, were pushed by White settlers onto **reservations**. These are lands set aside for Native American tribes by the U.S. government.

The Crazy Horse Memorial honors the Oglala chief Crazy Horse. It is still being built today.

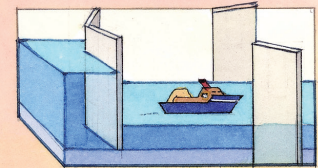




The back gates open and the ship enters the lock. Then the gates close.



Water is taken out of or released into the lock to lower or raise the ship.



The front gates open and the ship leaves the lock.

5. Michigan's Soo Locks: Linking the Great Lakes

The next stop on the tour is the Soo Locks in Michigan. Locks are used to raise and lower ships between different bodies of water. The Soo Locks are two of the longest locks in the world, and they can raise and lower ships that are about 1,000 feet in length. Many people say that these locks are one of the greatest wonders of the world.

The Great Lakes are part of a water highway that stretches from the Midwest to the Atlantic Ocean. Ships move from lake to lake along canals. Because the lakes are at different water levels, locks are used to lift and lower ships from one lake to the next. The Soo Locks raise or lower ships the difference of 21 feet between Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

Many ships pass through the Soo Locks each day. Some are small passenger boats. Others are oceangoing ships filled with iron ore, coal, grain, or other cargo. People call these ships "salties" because they have journeyed from the Atlantic Ocean.

In Lake Superior, a ship approaches the Soo Locks. The water in Lake Superior is higher than the water in Lake Huron. The Soo Locks will lower the ship to Lake Huron. The diagram shows how the lock raises and lowers ships between the two lakes.

6. Detroit, Michigan: America's Motor City

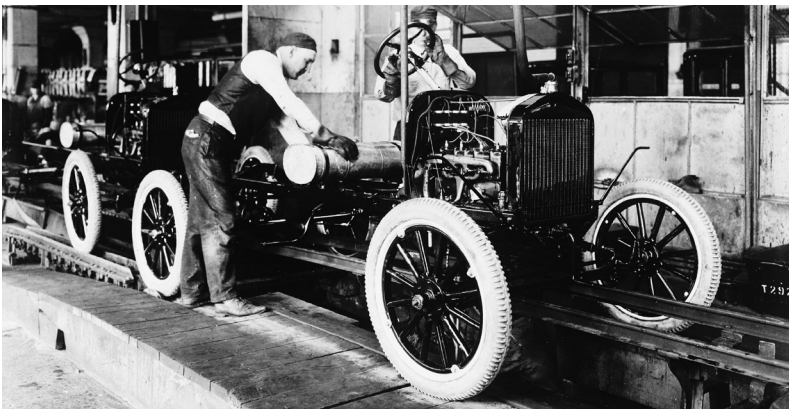
In 1896, a Michigan farm boy named Henry Ford built his first car. At that time, automobiles were very expensive to buy. People saw cars as toys for the rich.

But Ford had different ideas. He dreamed of building cars that most people could afford. Ford's dream gave birth to the American automobile industry.

In 1903, Ford started an automobile factory in Detroit, Michigan. He needed a way to keep his costs down. In the past, workers could build only one car at a time. To solve this problem, Ford installed a moving **assembly line**. A moving belt carried unfinished cars past workers. Each worker did one task. One worker might install a windshield. Another might screw on a door handle. The time needed to assemble a car dropped from 12 hours to just 93 minutes. The assembly line lowered the cost of each car by reducing the time it took to make it.

Ford's success brought other carmakers to Detroit. Detroit became known as "Motor City," or "Motown" for short. The automobile industry attracted many other businesses to the Midwest, too.

Today, Midwest industries continue to look for better ways to manufacture goods. One example is the invention and use of robots, or computer-controlled mechanical devices, to speed up assembly lines.



Ford began using assembly lines to build his cars. Assembly lines allowed cars to be created more quickly.

7. O'Hare International Airport: The Midwest's Transportation Hub

You are looking at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, Illinois. It is one of the busiest airports in the United States. Hundreds of thousands of people pass through O'Hare each day. That adds up to millions of airplane passengers a year.

Chicago has been a **transportation hub**, or a center for moving goods and people, for almost 200 years. In the 1800s, railroad tracks fanned out from Chicago across the Midwest. Trains left Chicago every day, carrying goods from factories to small farming towns. The trains returned loaded with corn, wheat, and livestock for the big cities.

Today, railroads, highways, airports, rivers, and lakes move more people and goods into and out of Chicago than they do in any other American city. Moving all these people and goods is a big business. O'Hare International Airport, by itself, employs about 40,000 workers.

Transportation is important to the economy of the Midwest. Farms in the area rely on airplanes, trains, and trucks to move crops from one place to another. Many farmers have buyers from around the world. Without a good transportation system, how could farmers move food to other countries?



People from the Midwest can travel all over the world. Many of them leave from O'Hare International Airport.



8. Chicago's Wrigley Field

You are looking down at Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs. Sports are popular in the Midwest. The first professional baseball team played in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. But soon, sports teams began to appear in other cities around the Midwest.

Wrigley Field first opened in 1914. Back then, it was known as Weeghman Park. The Cubs played their first game there in 1916.

The Cubs are one of the oldest professional baseball teams. They won the World Series in 1907, and again in 1908. However, it took them more than 100 years to regain the title. The Cubs finally won the World Series again in 2016.

Wrigley Field is a special place for people who like baseball. It is the second-oldest baseball park in America. A lot of historic events have happened here. The most famous one may be Babe Ruth's "called shot," during Game 3 of the 1932 World Series. As the story goes, when Ruth came up to bat, he pointed to the bleachers. Then, on the next pitch, he hit a home run to that very spot.

Baseball is a popular sport in the Midwest. Many famous games have been played at Chicago's Wrigley Field.

9. Minnesota's Mall of America

The last stop on our tour is the Mall of America, in Bloomington, Minnesota. This is the largest indoor shopping mall in the United States. The Mall of America was built in 1992.

The nation's first mall covered by a roof was built in 1956. Its purpose was to make shopping a more pleasant experience by protecting shoppers from bad weather.

People in the Midwest have to pay a lot of attention to the weather. In winter, storms called blizzards bring heavy snow and freezing winds. Spring brings hailstorms that drop hailstones, or lumps of ice, instead of rain. Spring is also when tornado season begins. When the weather gets bad, indoor malls are a good way to protect shoppers. These malls also offer customers lots of choices of what to buy.

The Mall of America has more than 500 stores and an amusement park. It is one of the largest malls in the world.





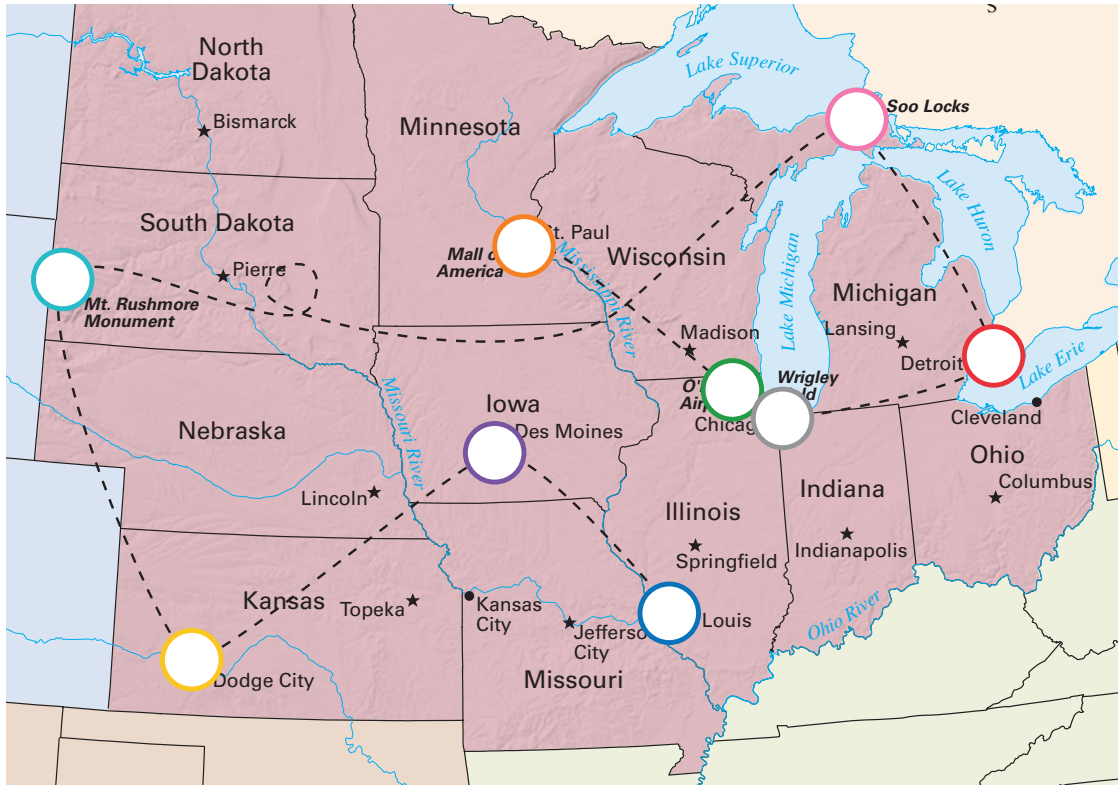
The Mall of America has more than 500 stores. If you spent just ten minutes in each one, it would take you four days and three nights to visit the entire mall. And that time doesn't include eating in any of the 50 restaurants, visiting any of the 14 movie theaters, or playing in the amusement park.

The Mall of America is important for more than just its size, though. It also has a big impact on the economy of the area. Each year, more than 40 million people visit the Mall of America. That is more than the entire population of Canada! Many of these visitors come from different countries. Because of all these visitors, the Mall of America brings a lot of money to the area. This money is used by the state to improve people's lives in many ways. The Mall of America also provides jobs for thousands of people.

Many people visit the Mall of America each year. These visitors have a large impact on the economy of the state.

At each stop along your tour of the Midwest:

1. Click on one of the stops on the map online.
2. Skim the corresponding text section to help you answer the focus question.
3. Find the hidden letter! On the map, record it at this stop.
4. Repeat these steps for the remaining stops. Then unscramble the letters to finish the sentence below.



The Midwest is America's ...

1. St. Louis, Missouri: Gateway to the West



Why was the Gateway Arch built?

2. The Farm State of Iowa



What three things make Iowa a great state for farming?

3. Dodge City, Kansas: Where the Cattle Once Roamed



Why is the sign for Dodge City decorated with cowboys?

4. South Dakota's Heroes



Why was this victory so significant to the Plains Native Americans?

5. Michigan's Soo Locks: Linking the Great Lakes



How do the Soo Locks make shipping between the lakes possible?

6. Detroit, Michigan: America's Motor City



Why did Henry Ford invent the moving assembly line?

7. O'Hare International Airport: The Midwest's Transportation Hub



Why do people call O'Hare a transportation hub?

8. Chicago's Wrigley Field



Why is Wrigley Field such a special spot for baseball fans?

9. Minnesota's Mall of America



How does the Mall of America help Minnesota's economy?

Summary

Do you remember the Midwest's two nicknames? The Midwest is called "America's Breadbasket" and "America's Heartland."

How did the Midwest get the nickname "America's Breadbasket"? The answer is that midwestern farmers grow a lot of the wheat used to make bread.

Why do you think the Midwest is called "America's Heartland"? There are many answers to this question. One answer has to do with geography. The Midwest lies at the heart, or center, of the United States. But, it is also the point where pioneers began their westward journeys. The Midwest is the heart of farming and industry, as well. From corn to cars, many products you use come from America's economic heartland.

Show What You Know



Suppose you are a tour guide of the Midwest. The tourists you are guiding have time for only three stops. What three stops would you recommend? Draw a picture for each stop and explain why you chose it.

1.



2.



3.



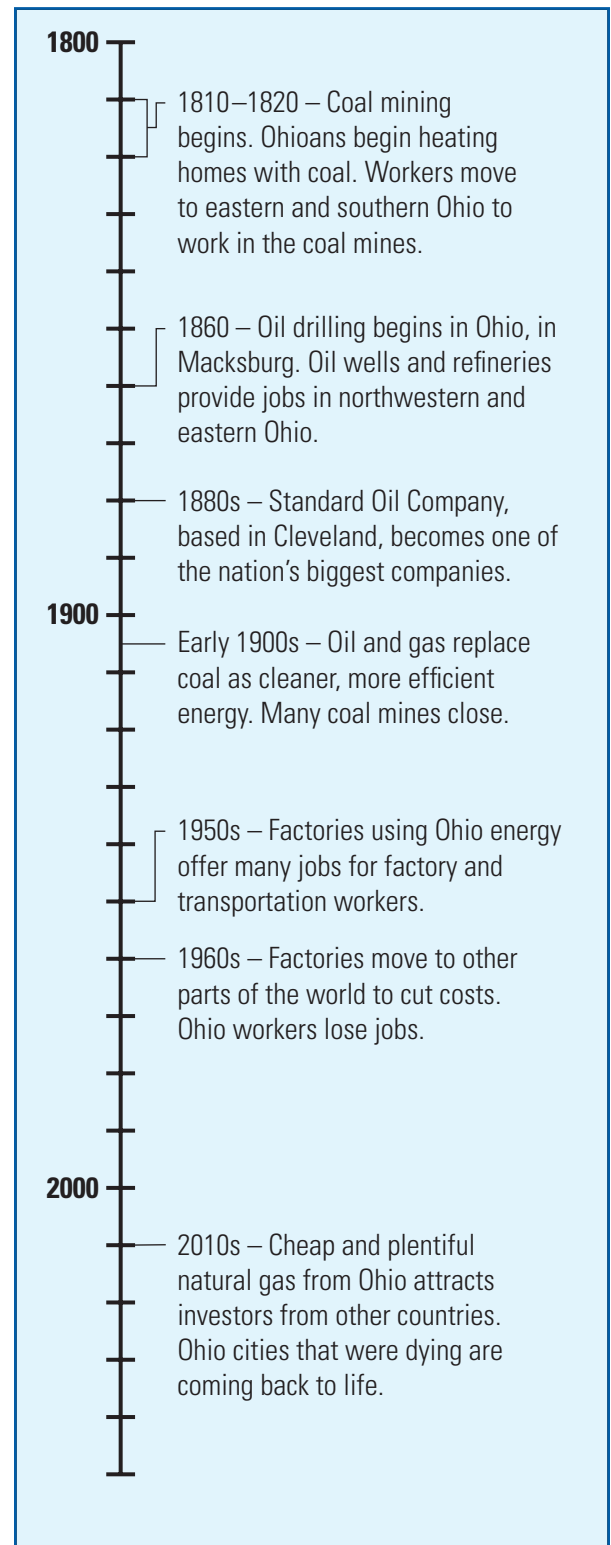
The Industries of Your State

You just read how industries help cities grow. Industries are groups of businesses, such as the automobile industry or entertainment industry. Do you know the biggest industries in your state? One place to find out is in an encyclopedia. Look up your state, and then find a section called “Economy.” One of the major industries in Ohio is energy. These are companies that produce power to run machines and create light and heat.

Pick one of the important industries in your state. Write the name of the industry at the top of a piece of paper. Then write this question: How has this industry affected our state? You will need to do research to answer this big question. Find books, encyclopedias, and reliable websites that include specific information about this one industry in your particular state.

Research the history of the industry in your state and write your facts on a timeline like this one. Include a year or time period, what happened, and how it affected the state. Keep in mind that the growth of industry can make a city grow, but when an industry changes or leaves a state, this can cause problems such as unemployment.

This timeline shows how the industries in Ohio have grown and changed. You can write a timeline for industries in your own state.

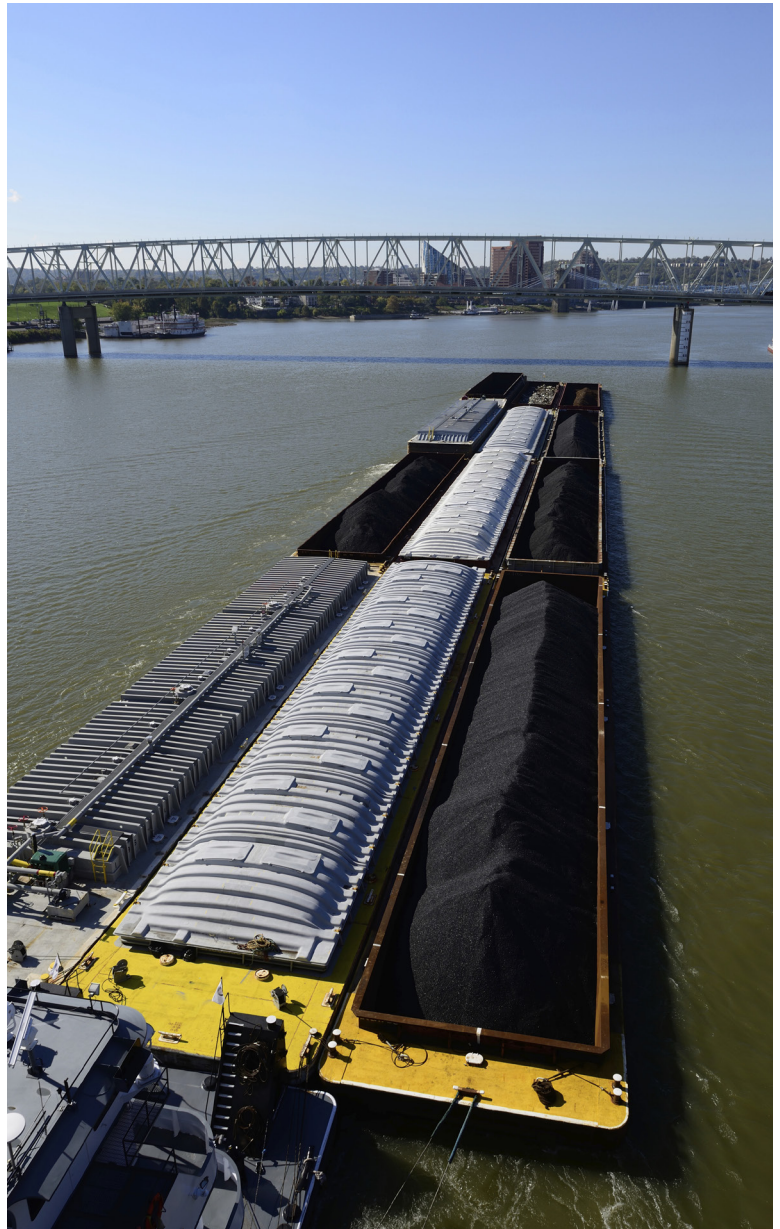


What Happened in Your State?

Through the years, companies in Ohio have mined coal, drilled oil, and produced natural gas. Coal mining, oil drilling, and other activities changed some of Ohio's physical land. People have been affected, too. When mines and oil and gas companies started, they created new jobs. When they closed, people lost jobs. When people lose jobs, they cannot buy goods in local stores. This affects the income of store owners.

Write a three-paragraph explanation that tells how one industry affected your state. Your first sentence should ask the question: How has the industry affected the state? Use your timeline and research notes to construct an explanation that answers the question. Write your explanation in a logical sequence, perhaps from its beginning to the present. Give examples of the different kinds of businesses and jobs in the industry. Add details about how industry affected the land, homes, jobs, daily life, or health in different communities. Add data, or number details, from charts, graphs, and articles that you find. For example, in 2013, 69 percent of Ohio's electricity came from coal, 15 percent came from natural gas, and 12 percent came from nuclear energy.

Exchange your explanation with a classmate. Read what your classmate wrote and tell him or her if you feel the reasoning, sequence, examples, and details are strong. Use your classmate's comments to revise your explanation.



Cleveland, Ohio, is a large city. There, in the late 1800s, Standard Oil Company was one of the first and largest oil companies in the nation.