

# THE WILD RIVER AND THE GREAT DAM

The Construction of Hoover Dam and the Vanishing Colorado River

BY SIMON BOUGHTON

## TEACHING TIPS



Discover the complicated history behind the construction of Hoover Dam— one of the country’s most recognizable and far-reaching landmarks—and its lasting political and environmental effects on the Colorado River and the American West.

### THIN AND THICK QUESTIONS

During and after reading *The Wild River and the Great Dam*, ask thick and thin questions. **Thin** questions deal with specific content while **Thick** questions lead students to think critically about the content.

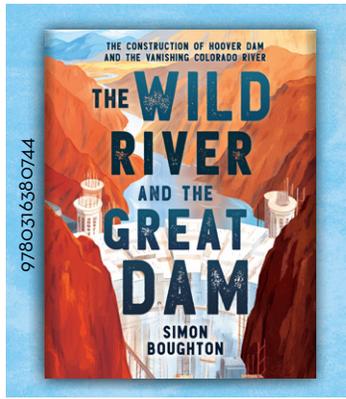
THIN QUESTIONS	THICK QUESTIONS
<p>Answer found in the book Doesn't require much thought Usually one right answer</p> <p>Thin questions ask . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who</b> was the construction superintendent?</li> <li>• <b>When</b> did President Roosevelt dedicate the dam?</li> <li>• <b>Where</b> is Hoover Dam located?</li> <li>• <b>What</b> river is used for irrigation in Imperial Valley?</li> <li>• <b>How many</b> dams are located in the Colorado River system?</li> </ul>	<p>Answer is not found in the book Requires opinions &amp; deeper-level thinking Multiple answers to the question</p> <p>Thick questions based on <i>The Wild River and the Great Dam</i> could be . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about the experience of the men building the dam?</li> <li>• Would you have endured the working conditions?</li> <li>• What could have been done differently in building the dam?</li> </ul>

### FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

After reading a chapter or at the conclusion of *The Wild River and the Great Dam*, have students write, draw, or create a visual about five topics discussed in the book. Topics might include the working conditions in building the dam, information about diverting the Colorado River, the formulation of Boulder City, specific engineering elements associated with the dam, or individuals who played a significant role in the time period or the construction of Hoover Dam.

### CHAPTER CHAIN LINKS

Cut strips of construction paper. After reading a chapter, have students write down one main concept or event. Have them do this for each chapter and then link the strips to form a paper chain. An alternative would be for students to link their paper strips together based on each chapter to show various connections to the same text.



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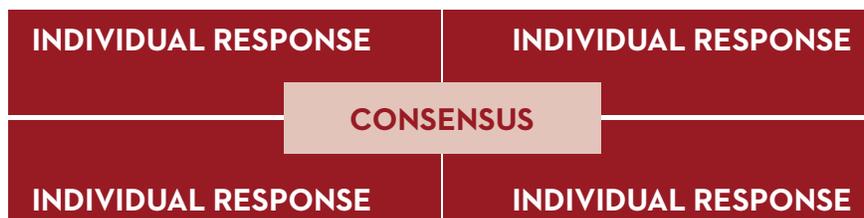
### TEXT FEATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

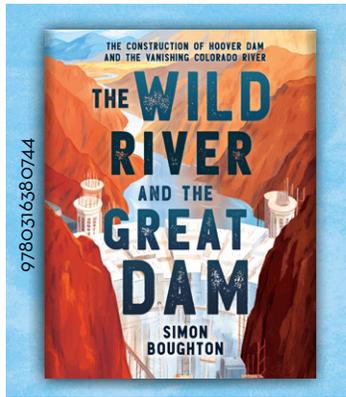
Engage students in a scavenger hunt to locate the following text features in *The Wild River and the Great Dam*

FEATURE	PAGE #	WHAT INFORMATION DID IT PROVIDE?
Table of contents		
Heading(s)		
Timeline		
Photograph(s)		
Pull quote(s)		
Map(s)		
Archival document(s)		
Source notes		
Index		

### CONSENSUS BOARDS

Divide students into groups of four. Draw the diagram below onto a large sheet of butcher paper. Each student should sit by a section of the paper surrounding the square. In their section, students generate a response by writing, drawing, or creating a diagram related to a chapter, topic, or issue from *The Wild River and the Great Dam*. After everyone documents their response, they share their thinking with the rest of the group and discuss, ask questions, and elaborate on each other's ideas. Next, the students must reach a consensus as to what is the most crucial idea, tension, or issue they want to spend time thinking about as a group. This is recorded in the center square. The group can spend additional time revisiting the text to locate information or quotations to further the group discussion.





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## COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

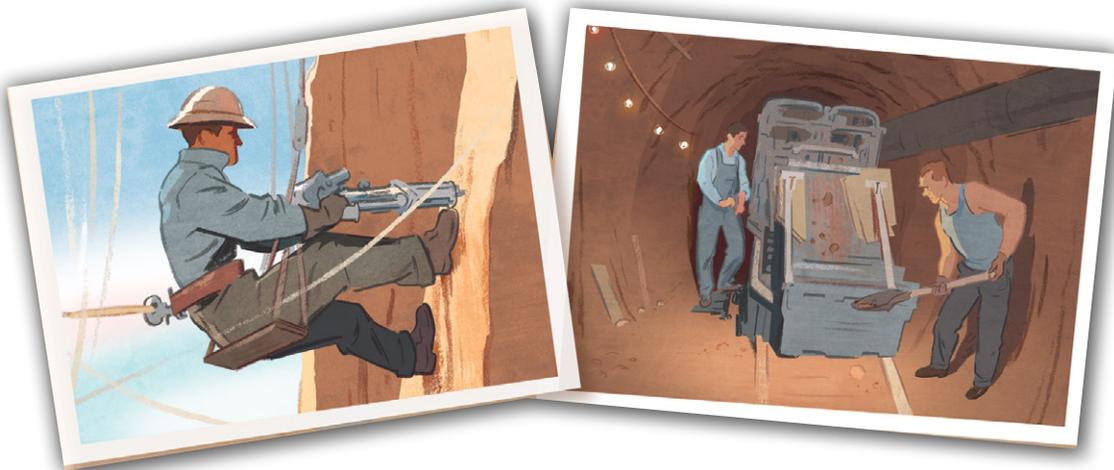
Explain to students that stamps often commemorate the life of an individual, or a historical event, or depict animals, holidays, and even cartoon characters. Have students select a key person, event, or scene from *The Wild River and the Great Dam* to create a commemorative stamp. A picture, a selected phrase, quote, or caption, and the stamp's value should be included. Examples of commemorative stamps based on literature can be found at <http://litcircles.org>.

## INTERACTIVE INFORMATIVE TIMELINES

Gather books and resources that feature content and events from the years *The Wild River and the Great Dam* encompasses such as the stock market crash, the Great Depression, the election of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the appointment of Adolf Hitler as the Chancellor of Germany. Students generate a timeline of these historical events aligned with the construction of Hoover Dam. The timeline featured in the book's back matter can serve as an example. A good source for creating an interactive timeline can be found at <https://readwritethink.org>.

## MORE RESOURCES

Additional historical and current information about Hoover Dam can be located at <https://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/history/storymain.html> while ideas for teaching about Hoover Dam can be found at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/-the-greatest-dam-in-the-world-building-hoover-dam-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>.



These Teaching Tips were created by Cyndi Giorgis, Professor of Literacy Education and Children's Literature at Arizona State University.