



#### River Levee

The Mississippi River, like all rivers, is likely to overflow its channel during the year. This is a natural process, which adds to the fertility of the soil as the floodwaters deposit nutrients on the land. The area a river floods is called a floodplain. Flooding on a floodplain should be expected. Yet people build homes, towns, and even cities on the floodplains, sometimes very close to the river channel. To protect residents and their buildings, levees have been built along the river. A levee is a large embankment, which keeps the floodwaters from flowing beyond it. Some towns or cities have floodwalls and gates to stop the waters. Levees and floodwalls provide some protection, but they cannot stop the biggest floods. By interfering with the natural flow of the water, the levees sometimes make what would have been a small flood into a disastrous flood. The image shows a levee in Lagrange, Mississippi, that was breached by the flooding of the Mississippi River in the spring of 1903. The men repairing the levee were convict laborers.

#### ART: Question 1

*How did floodwaters change the surrounding landscape?*

#### Question 2

*Why do you think that the Mississippi River floods in the springtime?*

#### Question 3

*Do you think that it is wise for people to live along the river when they know that the river is likely to flood each year? Why do people do so? Why do they come back even after their homes have been destroyed by the floodwaters?*

#### Question 4

*Do you think that a levee should be rebuilt after it has been broken or breached?*