

# Song of the Chattahoochee: Appreciating Nature Through Literature

**Learning Focus:** poetry, literary analysis, watersheds

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Students will identify literary elements of a poem.
- Students will discuss ways in which they are connected to water.
- Students will suggest ways to protect our waters.

## **Enduring Understandings for the Lesson:**

- Poetry is an important genre in our understanding and enjoyment of literature.
- Water is a vital human resource and humans must play an important role in its conservation.
- We all live within a watershed and are connected to the Ocean.

**Grade Level:** 6<sup>th</sup> grade

## **Georgia Performance Standards:**

**ELA6R1** The student demonstrates comprehension and shows evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.

For literary texts, the student identifies the characteristics of various genres and produces evidence of reading that:

g. Defines and explains how tone is conveyed in literature through word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, and rhyme.

h. Responds to and explains the effects of sound, figurative language, and graphics in order to uncover meaning in literature:

i. Sound (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme scheme)

ii. Figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification)

## **Materials:**

- Copies of poem "Song Of The Chattahoochee" by Sidney Lanier (available at <http://ngeorgia.com/poetry/songofthechattahoochee.html>) (one per student)
- Copies of student activity sheet: Getting To Know "Song Of The Chattahoochee" and the Chattahoochee Watershed. (one per student)

- Georgia state maps that show both rivers and towns (one per student) (available online at: [http://www.nationalatlas.gov/printable/images/pdf/reference/pagegen\\_ga.pdf](http://www.nationalatlas.gov/printable/images/pdf/reference/pagegen_ga.pdf))

**Time Needed:** 2 class periods

### **Background Information:**

Sidney Lanier, author of the poem "Song Of The Chattahoochee", was a poet, novelist, and composer who lived in the mid-1800s. Some of his most loved poems are his celebrations of Georgia's natural habitats and landforms. "Song of the Chattahoochee" uses a variety of literary devices, including alliteration, personification and symbolism, to represent the rhythm of the river as it travels through northeast Georgia and makes its way through the piedmont and plains toward the Gulf of Mexico.

The Chattahoochee is Georgia's largest tri-state river basin and one of Georgia's fourteen major watersheds. The headwaters are in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and it flows 430 miles through Georgia. The lower portion of the river is the boundary between Georgia and Alabama and between Georgia and Florida. It joins the Flint River at Lake Seminole and forms the Apalachicola River, which flows 106 miles through Florida to the Gulf of Mexico.

Millions of people depend on the Chattahoochee River system for drinking water, recreation, water assimilation, hydro power, wildlife habitat and fisheries, industries and farming. This lifeline from Georgia's mountains to the sea is threatened by sewage spills, leaking septic systems, trash, and polluted storm water from overdevelopment, which find its way into the river which supplies our drinking water.

### **Learning Procedure:**

#### **Day 1**

1. Give each student a copy of the poem "Song Of The Chattahoochee" by Sidney Lanier.
2. Explain the information given in the background section about Sidney Lanier and his work, the qualities of the poem, and the Chattahoochee watershed.
3. Read aloud the first reading of the poem after asking the students to listen for the musical and rhythmic qualities of the poem.
4. Divide the class into two groups for the second reading of the poem. In each stanza, have Group A read lines 1 and 2, Group B read lines 3 and 4, Group A read lines 5 and 6, Group B read lines 7 and 8, and Group A read lines 9 and 10. This procedure will illustrate the songlike nature of the poem.

5. Divide the class into groups of four and have each group begin working on the student activity sheet entitled: Getting To Know The "Song Of The Chattahoochee" and the Chattahoochee Watershed.
6. Collect activity sheets from each group at the end of the class period and explain that the activity will be completed during the next class period.

## **Day 2**

1. Have each group complete the activity sheet started the previous day.
2. Once completed, bring the whole group back together and discuss each question from the activity sheets including the sites they chose to visit within the Chattahoochee watershed.
3. Discuss the concept of a watershed and how pollution can affect our watersheds.

## **Evaluation:**

Ask students to respond to the following questions:

1. What literary devices does Lanier use in his poem "Song Of The Chattahoochee" to create a poem that is flowing and rhythmic?
2. Describe the terrain and the flora that the river "sees" on its journey to the sea.
3. The Chattahoochee River flows through the large urban areas of Columbus and Atlanta. What effects do you think these cities might have on that river?
4. The Chattahoochee is the primary source of water for over half of Georgia's population. What do you think the citizens of Georgia should do to protect the river? How can you and your family conserve water?

## **Extensions**

1. Read Sidney Lanier's poem "The Marshes of Glynn". Use this poem as a jumping off point for a study of Georgia's marshland and our coastal ecosystems.
2. Complete the "What is a Watershed" lesson from the Georgia Aquarium website - <http://www.georgiaaquarium.org/lessonplan.aspx> .
3. Participate in a clean-up of a river that flows through your county. Contact the Rivers Alive, Georgia Annual Waterway Cleanup event to find out when the next clean-up will be in your area or to receive advice on how your school can schedule its own clean-up:  
[http://aesl.ces.uga.edu/aascd/RiversAlive/ra\\_cleanups.asp](http://aesl.ces.uga.edu/aascd/RiversAlive/ra_cleanups.asp)

4. Work in the same study groups to create brochures on places to visit in the Chattahoochee watershed.
5. Research and write a short expository paper on historical events that have happened along the river (a great social studies connection).
6. Have students write a poem or story about an animal or perhaps just a drop of water that travels the Chattahoochee or another waterway.

### Resources:

- [www.brownsguides.com](http://www.brownsguides.com) for locations where you can see or experience the Chattahoochee River or its tributaries for recreation
- EPA website at [www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/](http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/watershed/) for information about watersheds, additional lessons, and resources
- Georgia River Network at [www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org) for fact sheets about the 14 major watersheds in Georgia
- Adopt A Stream at [www.georgiaadoptastream.org/home.html](http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org/home.html) for maps, workshops and educator's guides

### Lesson developed by:

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*This activity is a product of the Rivers to Reef Educators Workshop sponsored by the Georgia Aquarium and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary in which the author participated. For more information about this workshop, Georgia Aquarium, or NOAA Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, please visit our websites at [www.georgiaaquarium.org](http://www.georgiaaquarium.org) or <http://graysreef.noaa.gov/>*



## Getting To Know "Song Of The Chattahoochee" and the Chattahoochee watershed

Student Name:

Group Members:

1. In the first stanza of the poem, Sidney Lanier uses personification to turn the poem into an allegory of a person motivated to resist temptations and do his duty, which is to water the land. He accomplishes this with a single word. What is the word?

2. What is the rhyme scheme for this poem?

3. Write the pairs of words that show external rhyme in each stanza:

Stanza 1-

Stanza 2-

Stanza 3-

Stanza 4-

Stanza 5-

4. Write the pairs of words that show internal rhyme in each stanza:

Stanza 1-

Stanza 2-

Stanza 3-

Stanza 4-

Stanza 5-

5. What word in line 18 illustrates onomatopoeia?

7. Lanier mentions the beautiful flora that the river "sees" on its journey. Make a list of these trees and plants.

8. What precious stones are mentioned in the 4th stanza?

9. Line 46 says, "The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn". What industries, past and present, might depend on the river for power?

10. "Song Of The Chattahoochee" is a tribute to the natural world and is rich in sensory details. Choose a line that appeals to the following senses:

sight-

smell-

hearing-

11. What is the theme(s) of the poem?

12. Write three lines from the poem that show alliteration.

13. How do you think Sidney Lanier feels about the river?

14. How is our community connected to a river?  
What are your personal experiences with the river?

15. What can each of us do to protect the river and keep it clean?

16. On your Georgia map, identify and highlight the following.

- In dark blue, highlight the Chattahoochee River from its beginning in Habersham County to where it flows into the Gulf of Mexico.
- In light blue, highlight the rivers that flow into the Chattahoochee.
- In red, circle your hometown and outline your county.
- In green, highlight your local river from your community to where it meets the Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic Ocean.

17. Imagine that you are a tour group traveling through Georgia. Choose 5 locations within the State where you can experience the beauty of the river and enjoy recreational activities. Write a few sentences about each selection and what activities you might do there.

Be prepared to share your selections with the class.

*(www.brownsguides.com is an excellent resource for this activity)*

Getting To Know "Song Of The Chattahoochee" and the  
Chattahoochee watershed  
**(ANSWER KEY)**

1. In the first stanza of the poem, Sidney Lanier uses personification to turn the poem into an allegory of a person motivated to resist temptations and do his duty, which is to water the land. He accomplishes this with a single word. What is the word?

**“I”**

2. What is the rhyme scheme for this poem?

**abcbddcab**

3. Write the pairs of words that show external rhyme in each stanza:

Stanza 1- **Habersham/Habersham, Hall/fall, plain/again, wide/side**

Stanza 2- **Habersham/Habersham, Hall/thrall, abide/tide, stay/delay**

Stanza 3- **Habersham/Habersham, Hall/tall, manifold/hold, pine/sign**

Stanza 4- **Habersham/Habersham, Hall/brawl, stone/lone, mist/amethyst**

Stanza 5- **Habersham/Habersham, Hall/call, plain/main, turn/yearn**

4. Write the pairs of words that show internal rhyme in each stanza:

Stanza 1- **amain/plain, pain/attain/plain**

Stanza 2- **cried/abide, sighed/abide**

Stanza 3- **told/manifold, overleaning/meaning, cold/manifold**

Stanza 4- **shone/stone**

Stanza 5- **fain/plain, burn/turn, main/plain**



5. What word in line 18 illustrates onomatopoeia?

**sighed**

18. Lanier mentions the beautiful flora that the river "sees" on its journey.

Make a list of these trees and plants.

**rushes, waterweeds, laurel, ferns, grass, dewberry, hickory, poplar, chestnut, oak, walnut, pine**

19. What precious stones are mentioned in the 4th stanza?

**ruby, garnet, amethyst**

20. Line 46 says, "The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn".

What industries, past and present, might depend on the river for power?

**answers will vary – agriculture, power plants, textiles, shipping, etc.**

21. "Song Of The Chattahoochee" is a tribute to the natural world and is rich in sensory details. Choose a line that appeals to the following senses:

sight-

smell- **answers will vary**

hearing-

22. What is the theme(s) of the poem?

- **Duty / purpose**
- **Permanence / timelessness of nature**
- **Different lands are connected by our waters**

23. Write three lines from the poem that show alliteration.

**answers will vary**

24. How do you think Sidney Lanier feels about the river?

**answers will vary**

25. How is our community connected to a river?  
What are your personal experiences with the river?

**answers will vary**

26. What can each of us do to protect the river and keep it clean?

**answers will vary**

27. On your Georgia map, identify and highlight the following.

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28. Imagine that you are a tour group traveling through Georgia. Choose 5 locations within the State where you can experience the beauty of the river and enjoy recreational activities. Write a few sentences about each selection and what activities you might do there.

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