

Title: River to the Sea
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When you have a **river** for a neighbor, you can't help but get wet. I live beside the West **River** in Vermont. It's deep enough to swim in and as wide as a two-lane road. I've fished and skimmed stones on the West **River**. I've even fallen in. But for all the time I've spent playing in the **river**, I didn't know where it began or where it ended. I decided to find out.

Rivers often start in the mountains with no more than a trickle. Rain, melting snow, and water from springs have nowhere to go but down. As trickles follow the easiest paths down, they combine to form brooks. Brooks join to become streams, and streams meet to become **rivers**. As more and more water joins a **river**, it gets wider and deeper and faster.

That's what happens to the West **River**. I followed a map to learn this. I drove, then hiked, into the wooded hills about fifteen miles north of my house. I saw that the West **River** begins as a dribble, skinny as a pencil. By the time it reaches my town, it has become a **river**.

Rivers work hard. They're great diggers. The swift current of a **river** is a watery shovel digging up pebbles, silt, and sand. **Rivers** are also carriers. They carry lots of rocks and sand downstream.

In most large **rivers**, the current is strongest in the deepest part. I can get my feet wet and test this. When I step into ankle-deep water, I feel very little current. But as I step farther out where the water rises over my knees, the current tugs at my legs. I like to ride the river's current on my tube or rubber raft in summer.

Rivers are great places to see fish, insects, and other wildlife. Lots of animals and birds live near **rivers** because there's a good food supply, plenty of drinking water, nesting places, and shelter. To see wildlife, I step quietly. I never know what might be around the next bend--a deer and fawn drinking, a family of ducks, a dragonfly skimming the water hunting mosquitoes. I once saw a bird called an osprey flying over the West **River** with a foot-long fish in its claws. **Rivers** are a source of life to many creatures.

Most **rivers** eventually empty into the **sea**. Once again, I got into my car with a map, this time to see where the West **River** goes. I followed it through the countryside of southern Vermont to find that it merges with the wide Connecticut **River**. The Connecticut **River** flows out of Vermont, south into Massachusetts, then into Connecticut. It finally joins Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean.

The **river** outside my door is connected to faraway places. It's neat to know that if I launched a sturdy boat into the **river** by my house, someday it might reach the open **sea**. That's the best thing about a **river**. It's water on the move, and it knows just where to go.

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[Top of page](#)