

## Gateway of Little Egypt

**Topic:** How Geography influenced the history of hometowns and continues to influence.

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**Grade:** 5 - 8

**Time:** 40 minute class

**Themes:** Region, Location, Place, Movement, Human-Environment Interaction

**Standards:** National — Standard 3 Grades 5-8: How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

Illinois — Standard 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the United States.

17.D.3b Explain how interactions of geographic factors have shaped present conditions.

**Materials:**

1. Illinois road maps, one per student.
2. Large Illinois map.
3. Map of hometown, Salem, one per student.
4. Tourism Guide of Salem, one per student.
5. Marion County Township Map with oil pipelines mapped.
6. Marion County Maps, one per student.
7. Nature Trail Map
8. News clippings
9. [www.ci.salem.il.us](http://www.ci.salem.il.us)

**Objective:** 1. To familiarize students with the use of state and local maps.

2. To empower students with discovery skills.

3. To increase student passion to learn.

**Goals:**

1. Students will be able to discover the past and how Geography has been a factor.

2. Students will be able to see beyond the obvious on maps and collect and communicate the information gathered.

3. Students will be able to work in groups cooperatively.

**Procedure:** 1. Give students a surprise quiz:

Why did your family settle in Salem?

What brought the first settlers to Salem?

What is Salem's nickname?

How did Salem get its nickname?

What do you know about Salem's resources?

2. Go over the quizzes and ask students to share any or all of their answers. Then share that it was the largest earthquake in the history of the new American republic that brought the first settlers to Salem. The New Madrid (Missouri) quake of 1811 – the quake that caused the Mississippi River to flow backwards and church bells as far away as Boston – sent Captain Samuel Young searching for a more hospitable home. Finding abundant game and tranquility when he reached present-day Salem, he made camp on what is now the courthouse square. Seven years later Illinois became a state (1818) and five years after that, in 1823, Salem was founded as the County Seat of the newly formed Marion County.

3. Explain to students that this lesson will guide them to discover more of these facts and will also give them the tools to discover more.

4. Display a large Illinois map with Salem hi-lighted. Give a brief account of how Salem received its nickname, "Gateway of Little Egypt". The nickname goes back to the year 1831, when crops failed in the northern two thirds of Illinois, Northern and Central Illinois. (Point out these regions on the large Illinois map.) Northerners' trips through the region for corn were compared to biblical accounts of Israelites' journeys to Egypt to purchase grain.
  
5. The students will be given the necessary materials (state and county maps, tourism guide, and road maps). Allow students five minutes to become familiar with the materials.
  
6. The students will speculate on other reasons for settlement in Salem. Display a Marion County Township map that has oil pipelines mapped on it. Ask them what they know about oil in their area (many derricks are still in use). Then ask them about the "oil boom" period in Salem's history. This is a more recent and more well-known reason for settlement in Salem. The boom or explosion in industry and population came at an important time in the history of Salem, the United States, and other parts of the world, the 1930s. Ask students if they know what was happening then. If they do not know, have guided research on the internet at [www.ci.salem.il.us](http://www.ci.salem.il.us) to help students discover that an economic depression was occurring. Students will discover that the City of Salem was transformed in the 1930's from a quiet-paced small town doing its best to recover from the depression to a city hit with "the oil boom". After the initial shock of an overnight population explosion, economy spiraled upward. Many of the "oil boom" houses are still in Salem. Restaurants had a booming business also. Farmers went to work in oil fields along with other people in need of a job. Before long, Salem oil industries and land owners had become a part of a business which was noted for having the second highest amount of oil production in any one area. In 1939, 93 million barrels of oil were pumped from Marion County's farmland.

7. The students will be asked what attracts people to Salem now that the many of the oil pipelines and related businesses have closed. Guide them to Salem's location on their road maps and ask what major highways are in or near Salem. Next have them look on page 5 of their Salem tourism guide to the Location map of Illinois which only has major highways relating to Salem on it. They can easily see that Interstate 57 runs through Salem to Chicago to the north and to the southern tip of Illinois. Also, Interstate 70, out of St. Louis, is thirty miles north of Salem. Twenty miles south of Salem is Interstate 64, which also goes to St. Louis. Ask, "Does location help explain why people may choose to settle in Salem now?"
8. Students will use their maps and guides to work in groups of 3 or 4 to brainstorm at least five reasons for settlement in Salem, using the five themes of geography as a guide.
9. Students will work together in their group to make a brochure based on their findings and will include the five themes of geography and illustrations and a map of Illinois.

**Rubric:**

- A - Includes all 5 themes of Geography, a map of Illinois with Salem hi-lighted, correct spelling, eye-catching.
- B - Includes all 5 themes of Geography and a map of Illinois.
- C - Includes 3 themes of Geography and a map of Illinois.
- D - Includes a map of Illinois.
- F - Does not include any themes of Geography or a map of Illinois.

**Extension:**

Oral history assignment – Students will interview parents, grandparents, and or residents of Salem to discover more about the history and settlement of Salem. Extra credit will be awarded if their interviews are on an audio or video tape.