



# Read and Comprehend

## Chad Pregracke: Mississippi River Hero

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Today Chad Pregracke is a River Warrior. He is known all around the country for organizing massive river cleanups, filling large barges with garbage pulled from the Mississippi River. His hard work, charismatic leadership, and vision of a clean river have earned him many awards and honors over the years, including the prestigious National Jefferson Award for Public Service. His efforts have been written about in *Time*, *People*, and *National Geographic* magazines and shown on television on *CNN* and the *Discovery Channel*.

However, not that long ago he was a student just like you. Chad grew up just 15 miles from the Mississippi River outside of Hampton, Illinois. He and his older brother spent much of their time on, in, and around the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. During summer breaks from high school and college, Chad worked on the river as a commercial fisherman, shell diver, and barge hand.

While working and playing on the river, Chad couldn't help but notice all the trash along the river. Believing someone in charge should take care of it, he started calling government agencies to notify them of the problem. He even sent photos of the large piles of garbage as proof. No one responded. Year after year passed by and the problem only worsened.

In 1997 Chad decided that, if no one else was going to clean up the river, then he would, one piece of garbage at a time. Working alone, Chad began pulling trash from the Mississippi River. That first year, he removed 45,000 pounds of garbage by himself. People began taking notice.

In 1998 at the age of 23, Chad founded *Living Lands & Waters*, a nonprofit organization based in East Moline, Illinois, dedicated to cleaning up and preserving our nation's rivers. With support from individuals and corporations, Chad raised enough money to hire a small cleanup crew and fleet of boats.

Today, the organization has grown to include 10 full-time employees and a fleet of 4 barges, a towboat, 6 workboats, 2 skid steers, 5 work trucks, and a large box truck. With this equipment, the crew is able to travel and work in an average of 9 states a year along the Mississippi, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, and Potomac Rivers, as well as many of their tributaries.

Since the project's inception, Chad, his crew, and over 60,000 volunteers have collected over 6 million pounds of debris from our nation's greatest rivers. Most recently, Chad expanded the mission of the organization to include *Big River Educational Outreach*, *The Million Trees Project*, and the *Adopt-a-River Mile* programs.



**Answer the following questions about Chad Pregracke.**

1. Where did Chad grow up? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why did Chad decide to clean up the Mississippi River? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What jobs did Chad do on the river during summer breaks? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What is the name of the non-profit organization Chad started? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How many pounds of garbage have Chad and his organization pulled from U.S. rivers?

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