



## The Black River Quest

### Springfield, Vermont

Physical Difficulty: Easy

Special Features: Historical, river health

Walking Conditions: Pavement

Duration: 0:40

Season: May-Oct

Bring: Compass

**To get there:** From I-91, merge onto VT 11 toward Springfield. In about 4 miles, you'll see the Oriental Palace on your right. At this point, take a left onto Mineral Street. This Quest starts in the parking lot on the right, directly across from the State building at 100 Mineral Street.

### Overview:

Twenty two students from Union Street School created this Quest in the fall of 2018. Through engaging in the quest-writing process, they learned about Springfield's affluent and exciting history, river anatomy, watersheds, environmental stewardship, mapping, and compass skills. Add to that the challenge of distilling their learning into the following quatrains, and it's fair to say that this project supported a wealth of learning goals across a multitude of disciplines. The students want you to know to please keep our river clean! What is dumped in the Black River flows to the Connecticut River, on to the Atlantic Ocean, and ultimately to other parts of the world!

### Clues:

You're just about to start our quest.  
 We wonder which part you'll like best.  
 From view, to shop, to waterfall.  
 We really hope you like it all!

From this lot in which you start  
 Take a left and begin this part.  
 Now go south for a minute or two.

Stop and look at the beautiful view!

There was a toy shop next to the falls,  
Which created the first jointed dolls.  
Vermont Novelty was its name.  
Founded in 1858, making toys was its game!

In this area, Slack Shoddy Mill was founded in 1871.  
They made repurposed wool by the ton.  
Shoddy wool helped in WWII,  
Outfitting the soldiers and their crew.

Keep on walking just a smidge  
Take a left and you'll see a bridge.  
Keep going north on your quest.  
At the Community Center, take a quick rest.

Now on your left you will see  
Lovejoy's famous company.  
It was founded in 1916  
It still makes tools that make machines!

Keep on going past the church on your left  
With 6 solid pillars, it has lots of heft.  
On your right is the Bank Block, built in 1907  
The people who built it are probably now in heaven.

Go west at the corner of Park and Main  
At first this street may look pretty plain.  
On your right, check out Comtu Falls.  
If you listen closely, you'll hear how the river calls.

Keep going up the hill and on your right,  
You'll see an old building, it's quite a fright at night!  
Parks and Woolson was built in 1829  
With lots of windows through which the sun could shine.

In this shop filled with light  
To make it bright for better sight  
They finished cloth for our clothes  
Using the water because it flows!

Turn around and go back to Main  
We hope you're not in too much pain

You're about three quarters through  
Time to find another clue.

Take a left and go north  
Follow the sidewalk and go forth.  
You'll see a bridge up ahead.  
Where you can view part of the watershed.

In this factory, they made gears.  
Now it's home to Trout River beers!  
In 1896 Edwin Fellows ran this shop,  
His dedicated workers worked until they stopped.

Turn around and take a right  
You'll now go back to a familiar sight.  
Keep on movin' and groovin' 'til you see  
A long building that was Gilman Shoe factory.

In this place, shoes were made.  
They supported their families by getting paid.  
Factory owners made the most,  
factory workers heard them boast.

What did some shops do with their waste?  
Some of it looking like gooey, black paste?  
Well, they dumped it, of course in the river, you see.  
Sadly, pollution is part of our river's history.

But now many people keep it clean.  
Since 2000, we've had the Black River Action Team!  
Vermont's Clean Water act was passed in 2015  
In large part due to Legislator David Deen!

Now walk a few steps south and take a right.  
Comtu Cascade Park is the site  
Of Springfield's first house built in 1774.  
Because of the factories, soon there were many more!

This park was once a glacier.  
Three million years ago, this was North America's nature.  
When it melted it formed a great lake  
This is what the ice decided to make.

The Black River is 40 miles long.

Its rushing water is very strong.  
 The waterfall drops 120 feet.  
 There's a lot of things to say, so take a seat.

Because of gravity and the height of the shower.  
 The falls were used for hydroelectric power.  
 Hydroelectric power is still used today.  
 Powering our lights to keep the darkness at bay.

We wanted to test the river's water quality.  
 So we placed leaf packs<sup>1</sup> under the bridge, you see.  
 And studied them for the insects within.  
 To inform us of the river's condition.

Macro-invertebrates are the type of critter  
 That tells us how much people litter.  
 Thankfully we found some mayflies  
 Because pollution is what they despise!

Now that we've told you many facts.  
 It's now time for the finishing act.  
 At the park's entrance, face the water and turn right  
 Search the low wall and it might be in sight.

By doing this Quest we hope you know  
 How to help the river continue to flow.  
 Let's work together, to keep it clean—  
 There's lots to do, we can be a team!

*This Quest was created by Vanessa Stern's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class at Springfield's Union Street School in 2018.*

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<sup>1</sup> A leaf pack is an educational tool used to monitor river and stream health. It mimics the macroinvertebrate habitat created when leaves naturally accumulate in little packs in waterways. Some macroinvertebrate species found within can only live in water of a certain quality. By counting how many of these species are living in a leaf pack, one can get a sense for that river's health. The mayfly is an example of such an indicator species—they can only live in relatively clean water, so if you find them in your waterway, you can deduce that it is reasonably clean.

**Other things to do nearby:** Check out the new Muckross State Park for another waterfall, a pond, and beautiful trails (there's a Quest there too! The Muckross Quest). Also, venture to the mysterious stone formations atop Mount Ephraim, the tallest landmass in the Precision Valley (1,490').

**Please be a good steward of the land: leave it better than you found it and pack out any trash you find.**



Valley Quest is a collection of 100+ treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional nonprofit working to engage citizens, organizations, and communities in creating solutions to our region's challenges. Learn more at [vitalcommunities.org](http://vitalcommunities.org).

Have a suggestion, question, comment, or idea for us? We'd love to hear from you. Reach us at [valleyquest@vitalcommunities.org](mailto:valleyquest@vitalcommunities.org) or 802-291-9100.