

# DOWNRIVER



Join a group of teenagers who have been sentenced to an outdoor survival expedition that includes some wild times in the great outdoors and an unforgettable (and unplanned . . .) downriver escape through the Grand Canyon!

But before you read, find out about the man who wrote the book and the amazing country where the story is set. Keep moving ahead to learn all about the land of Downriver.

Teachers

For resources and more, see the Resources section at the end of this pathfinder.



Created by  
Stephanie A. Schene, Media Specialist, MSD Perry Township  
Indianapolis, IN  
S603  
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# Meet the Author



Will Hobbs, the author of *Downriver*, is known for his books about teenagers dealing with extremes in nature. He lives in southwestern Colorado, not far from the setting for the book.

Take a look at his website to learn more about him and how he ended up in the Southwest. You can also explore some of his other books there.

<http://www.willhobbsauthor.com/>

Find out what Will Hobbs tries to accomplish through his novels, and why he writes about young people and nature.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=13159>

How does Will Hobbs get started writing every day, and what does a dinosaur have to do with it?

<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/will-hobbs-aya/>

Read about Will and his wife's trip through the Grand Canyon, why he wrote *Downriver* from a girl's point of view, and see pictures showing the river at wild and calm points.

<http://www.willhobbsauthor.com/bookspages/book%20ideas%20pages/downrrthun.html>

What do other people think about this book? Click below and scroll down to read the School Library Journal and other reader reviews at Amazon.com:

<http://www.amazon.ca/Downriver-Will-Hobbs/dp/0833591983>

Watch a short video about Will Hobbs and visit his home in the mountains of Durango, Colorado. Check out "Good Conversation: A Talk with Will Hobbs" from the Media Center.

# The setting . . .

So where exactly is the Grand Canyon?

Here's the general area in the United States –

[http://www.world-guides.com/images/grand\\_canyon/map1\\_grand\\_canyon.jpg](http://www.world-guides.com/images/grand_canyon/map1_grand_canyon.jpg)

Once you're in Arizona, you can get a feel for where the canyon is from this state map –

<http://www.mapofarizona.net/>

Here is the whole river area in the novel, plus lots of locations that you'll hear more about –

<http://z.about.com/d/gocalifornia/1/0/p/N/gcarea.gif>

And here's an interactive map so you can move around and get closer –

[http://travel.yahoo.com/p-map-191501873-map\\_of\\_grand\\_canyon\\_az-i](http://travel.yahoo.com/p-map-191501873-map_of_grand_canyon_az-i)

You'll want to know about the nearby  
Native American reservations . . .



The Havasupai tribe and their reservation –

<http://www.havasupaitribe.com/aboutus.html>

[http://www.americansouthwest.net/arizona/grand\\_canyon/havasupai\\_canyon.html](http://www.americansouthwest.net/arizona/grand_canyon/havasupai_canyon.html)

The Navajo tribe and their reservation –

<http://www.americanwest.com/pages/navajo2.htm>

[https://academics.skidmore.edu/weblogs/students/navaho\\_and\\_hopi\\_pots/Navajo%20Churches.jpg](https://academics.skidmore.edu/weblogs/students/navaho_and_hopi_pots/Navajo%20Churches.jpg)

[https://academics.skidmore.edu/weblogs/students/navaho\\_and\\_hopi\\_pots/Navajo%20Churches.jpg](https://academics.skidmore.edu/weblogs/students/navaho_and_hopi_pots/Navajo%20Churches.jpg) (this is a reservation map)

# . . . and the Canyon!



## Some history . . .

How the canyon is formed (a chart of layers) -

<http://biograpys.wordpress.com/2009/03/14/icrs-grand-canyon-dating-project-2/>

A brief history of the canyon –

<http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/grand-canyon2.htm>

Find out about the first expedition down the canyon and why they didn't all come back –

<http://www.canyon-country.com/lakepowell/jwpowell.htm>

## What lives there now . . .

Animals – <http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/animals.htm>

Birds – <http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/birds.htm>

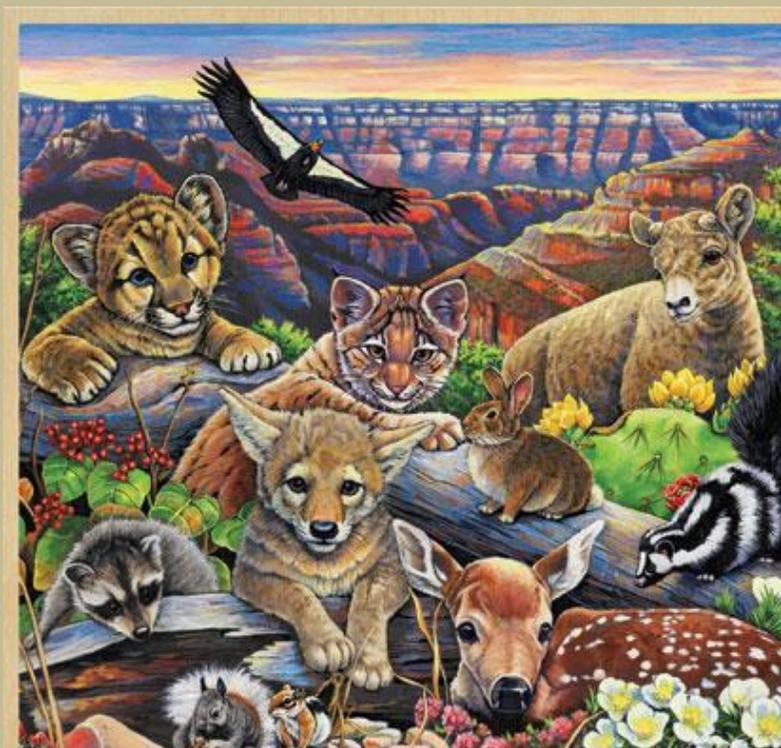
Snakes - <http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/reptiles.htm>

Plants - <http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/plants.htm>

Insects - (watch out for the spider!) –

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/grca/pphtml/subanimals5.html>

Fish - <http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/fish.htm>



Lots of interesting pictures taken around the Canyon, be sure to scroll down a bit to the list -

<http://www.cclockwood.com/stockimages/GrandCanyonBirds.htm>

Take a helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon! See the extended glass skywalk out over the Canyon with a background of Native American music.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvzIZuWrJNw>

Here's a close-up look at that skywalk 4,000 feet above the canyon floor! Hold on to your stomach!

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/03/070328-skywalk-video.html>

See what the Downriver characters saw – take a raft trip through the Canyon!

[http://www.metacafe.com/watch/2548837/white\\_water\\_rafting\\_on\\_the\\_grand\\_canyon\\_oars/](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/2548837/white_water_rafting_on_the_grand_canyon_oars/)

What to do if you get bitten by a rattlesnake . . .

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5013999\\_treat-rattlesnake-bites.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5013999_treat-rattlesnake-bites.html)

. . . or a scorpion!

<http://www.hitthetrail.com/scorpions.php>

Take a look at whitewater rafts and gear

<http://www.inceptmarine.com/>



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## Resources

A note to teachers:

This pathfinder was created to support a literature unit on Will Hobbs' novel, *Downriver*. It is aimed at grades 8-12, but was developed for use with 8<sup>th</sup> grade at-risk students in a literature circle environment. I have taught this novel a number of times and always thought that there must be an exciting array of electronic sources available that would not only grab students' attention and support the lit circle activities, but also give central Indiana students a feel for the Grand Canyon, its beauty and dangers (as experienced by the characters). My goal was to create a pathfinder that even my most reluctant reader wouldn't be able to ignore. I looked for interesting hooks that would grab a variety of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade readers – as well as the teachers!

Electronic materials were selected using various related keywords in Google and Google Images searches, and then reviewing a wide array of sites for appropriateness of content, interest value and relation to the *Downriver* novel. Keywords used included Will Hobbs+author, *Downriver*, Arizona, Grand Canyon, Havasupai tribe, Navajo tribe, Grand Canyon+history, John Wesley Powell, Grand Canyon+animals, Grand Canyon+birds, Grand Canyon +snakes, Grand Canyon+plants, Grand Canyon+insects, Grand Canyon+fish, Grand Canyon+photos, Grand Canyon+videos, Colorado River+raft trips, Grand Canyon+skywalk, rattlesnake+bite+treatment and Grand Canyon+scorpions. I specifically looked for colorful websites full of photos, to help students build mental pictures of the novel's setting.

I suggest using the pathfinder one of two ways.

1. It can be used as an introduction to the novel, especially following a KWL or previous knowledge exercise. Students can journal what they expect to find in/at the Grand Canyon based on prior knowledge or guesswork. Then the pathfinder can be followed (individually or as a group) to learn about the novel's setting. A follow-up journal entry can be made about what students learned that piqued their interest, and explanation of any misconceptions they may have had. Students may also want to return to the pathfinder for deeper information as they read the novel.

2. It can be used as a “guide by the side” as students read the novel. There are a number of resources that name locations along the river that also appear in the novel. Students can follow those links and learn more about particular places visited by the characters.

This following section contains:

- Extension ideas for use with the Downriver novel
- A listing of annotated electronic resources referenced in the pathfinder

### Extension Ideas

- Before starting the novel, have students express prior knowledge about the Grand Canyon, Colorado River and whitewater rafting by creating a web (or webs) using Inspiration software. Print off the webs and add them to the student journals.
- Before starting the novel, have students journal about how they would feel about being sentenced by the court to an outdoor adventure instead of time in a juvenile institution. What are the advantages and disadvantages as they see it? After the novel has been completed, ask students to reread this journal entry and create another, reflecting on how they feel about it now.
- Before starting the novel, assign different parts of the pathfinder to individual students in the lit circle and have them report back to the rest of the group about their findings.
- Using online mapping, paper maps or atlases, have students determine how far it is from their hometown to Grand Canyon National Park. Then determine how long it would take to travel there by car, and what route would be taken.
- Have students research the creation myth detailed in the novel, and make prayer sticks similar to those found by the characters.
- Dig deeper into the archaeological finds in the Grand Canyon area, such as the Anasazi ruins and cliff dwellings.
- Have students research Lake Mead, the anticipated ending point of the characters’ river run. Include information about Hoover Dam, and the role the Colorado River plays in supplying power to a large part of the American Southwest.
- Have students identify other books by Will Hobbs in the school library, and create a display showcasing them.

- If your library automation system includes the function, have students rate and write reviews of *Downriver*, and upload them so that they can be read by others.
- The author explains that writing comes from research and experience. After reading several of Will Hobbs' books, students research some of the places he writes about, such as the Grand Canyon and Alaska. Students create posters, dioramas, drawings or a short paper to document their findings.
- Will Hobbs has a common thread in his books. He says, "Take care of the land." "Take care of yourself." "Take care of each other." After reading *Downriver*, students create a journal entry discussing how Will Hobbs shows these thoughts in the novel.

### Electronic Resources

Official website of Will Hobbs - <http://www.willhobbsauthor.com/>

This is the official web site of award-winning author Will Hobbs. Will Hobbs writes outdoor adventure stories, picture books, and young adult novels. Meet the author and learn about his past, why he wanted to be a writer, and more. The covers of his books are displayed. Clicking on each one brings up an interview, photos of the author's adventures, story summaries, awards, and information on books and tapes. Read the answers to favorite questions. There is a section for teachers and librarians. Take a Will Hobbs trivia test to see what you know.

Random House authors (biographical info) -

<http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=13159>

Random House Publishing's author site provides a quote and a picture but no other personal information. Includes a list of titles authored by Hobbs, including *Downriver*. The quote is significant for its explanation of why he writes and why he has chosen the topics that he has.

Litplans for Will Hobbs books - [http://litplans.com/authors/Will\\_Hobbs.html](http://litplans.com/authors/Will_Hobbs.html)

Lesson plans, teacher's guides, novel unit plans, study guides, and more for Will Hobbs. Literature resources for English Teachers in middle school and high school.

## Electronic Resources (cont'd)

LitRags *Authors and Artists for Young Adults* on Will Hobbs (biographical info) -  
<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/will-hobbs-aya/>

A lighthearted biographical article that covers his youth, how he got started writing, and other facts. Not as engaging as the Will Hobbs official website, but has some interesting additional information.

School Library Journal and customer reviews at Amazon.com –  
<http://www.amazon.ca/Downriver-Will-Hobbs/dp/0833591983>

A review by SLJ and over 106 reader reviews of *Downriver*. Students may enjoy reading some reviews as a pre- or post-reading activity.

Maps of the U.S., Arizona, and the Grand Canyon area –

[http://www.world-guides.com/images/grand\\_canyon/map1\\_grand\\_canyon.jpg](http://www.world-guides.com/images/grand_canyon/map1_grand_canyon.jpg)

A relatively simplistic map of the United States, showing the general location of the Grand Canyon. Includes state borders and larger cities for reference points.

<http://www.mapofarizona.net/>

A map of Arizona, where students can easily identify the Colorado River, Grand Canyon National Park and other points of interest.

<http://z.about.com/d/gocalifornia/1/0/p/N/gcarea.gif>

A close-up map of Grand Canyon National Park and the setting of the novel. Note that a number of sites where action takes place in the novel can be identified from this map. This would be a good map to reproduce and have in students' journals for reference while reading *Downriver*.

[http://travel.yahoo.com/p-map-191501873-map\\_of\\_grand\\_canyon\\_az-i](http://travel.yahoo.com/p-map-191501873-map_of_grand_canyon_az-i)

An interactive map of the northern Arizona canyon country, including the Colorado River, Grand Canyon and several Native American reservations. Students can move the map to view various locations, and can follow the river all the way to Lake Mead.

Havasupai tribe info –

<http://www.havasupaitribe.com/aboutus.html>

This page provides a lot of basic information about the tribe in very simple language. It discusses the people, their history and community as it is today.

## Electronic Resources (cont'd)

Havasupai tribe info (cont'd) -

[http://www.americansouthwest.net/arizona/grand\\_canyon/havasu\\_canyon.html](http://www.americansouthwest.net/arizona/grand_canyon/havasu_canyon.html)

This site provides physical information about the reservation, including trail closures and dates. It includes information about Supai and other locations used in the novel.

Navajo tribe info –

<http://www.americanwest.com/pages/navajo2.htm>

This site gives interesting basic facts about the Navajo people, and includes a number of links to charts and pictures. There are sections about Navajo food, clothing and cultural events such as powwows.

[https://academics.skidmore.edu/weblogs/students/navaho\\_and\\_hopi\\_pots/Navajo%20Churches.jpg](https://academics.skidmore.edu/weblogs/students/navaho_and_hopi_pots/Navajo%20Churches.jpg) (reservation map)

This map shows the Navajo reservation near where the Downriver characters began their raft trip. In the novel, the characters drive the backroads of the reservation to escape detection. The map shows the reservation in context with the Colorado River.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHLYIRm0dbo> (video of reservation and music)

A video of the Bitterroot, AZ area and the Navajo reservation, showing the geography and beauty of the land. A soundtrack of Navajo music and singing accompanies the incredible scenery. Includes a picture of Window Rock, which figures importantly in Bearstone, another Hobbs novel set in this area.

History of the Grand Canyon –

<http://biograpys.wordpress.com/2009/03/14/icrs-grand-canyon-dating-project-2/>

This site has a lot of very detailed information relating to how the canyon came to be formed, but the reason it is included here is for the graphic at the very top of the online article. This chart shows the rock layers associated with the Grand Canyon, and gives a very simple visualization of how the various layers have heaved up and the river cut through them to form the canyon. I was unable to separate the graphic from the rest of the article, so I would instruct students to

## Electronic Resources (cont'd)

examine the graphic and then move on. This graphic could also be shared with a science earth science teacher covering prehistoric eras and crust upheaval.

<http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/grand-canyon2.htm>

This site contains a database of information on how all kinds of things operate or were formed. The page gives interesting information about the forming of the Grand Canyon, and includes a picture of tourists riding up a canyon trail in 1946. There are links at the top of the article to related articles from the database about geology and nature in the canyon, as well as to national park sites.

<http://www.canyon-country.com/lakepowell/jwpowell.htm>

This site tells the story of John Wesley Powell, the first person to adventure down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, in 1869. They were to cover almost 1,000 miles, and only six of the 10 original members survived.

Flora and fauna –

The National Park Service has an excellent site for each of its parks, with sections on animals, birds, reptiles, plants, fish, etc. The pages listed below all relate to Grand Canyon National Park, and include links to other pages of interest about the park.

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/animals.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/birds.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/reptiles.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/plants.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/grca/pphtml/subanimals5.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/fish.htm>

Photo collection –

<http://www.cclockwood.com/stockimages/GrandCanyonBirds.htm>

Although this URL seems to indicate it is all about birds, there are actually just a few pictures at the top of the page of birds in the Grand Canyon, followed by a list of photo collections relating to the canyon. In this collection, students

## Electronic Resources (cont'd)

can view cactus, flowers, activities by groups rafting on the river, and other general interest photos. I selected this collection for its inclusion of photos of locations used in the novel, specifically Tapeats Creek in the River Landscapes; Havasu Falls and Havasu Canyon; Supai in the Havasupai Indian Reservation; Lava Falls; Little Colorado River (River of Blue); and the Vasey's Paradise, Havasu Falls and Travertine Falls waterfalls.

Helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon, Native American music accompaniment –

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvzIZuWrJNw>

This is a trip! Students will love taking a helicopter trip through the canyon as they listen to Native American music in the background. Includes views of the Grand Canyon Skywalk and an impressive pull-back view of the helicopter disappearing into the enormity of the canyon walls.

Grand Canyon Skywalk video

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/03/070328-skywalk-video.html>

And this video is just as exciting! Although there is no sound or narration, standing 4,000 feet (1,220 meters) above the Grand Canyon's floor with only a few inches of glass separating you from oblivion is pretty impressive. There are even a few looks over the edge - another kid-pleaser!

Grand Canyon raft trip video

[http://www.metacafe.com/watch/2548837/white\\_water\\_rafting\\_on\\_the\\_grand\\_canyon\\_oars/](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/2548837/white_water_rafting_on_the_grand_canyon_oars/)

Although this video was prepared to sell rafting trips, the pitch isn't a strong one, the visuals are outstanding and several locations from the novel are seen, such as the large cave, and Sockdolager and Crystal rapids. There are some good visuals of boats rafting in some pretty hairy-looking rapids.

Rattlesnake bite treatment

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5013999\\_treat-rattlesnake-bites.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5013999_treat-rattlesnake-bites.html)

A question that always comes up – should you really suck out the poison or not? A serious issue for the characters in Downriver and anyone else interested in spending time in rattlesnake country.

## Electronic Resources (cont'd)

### Scorpion bite treatment

<http://www.hitthetrail.com/scorpions.php>

Students will learn in *Downriver* about the only poisonous scorpion found in the Grand Canyon area – and how dangerous it can be. This is another site that students might want to go back and review when they reach the relevant part of the novel.

### Whitewater rafts and gear

<http://www.inceptmarine.com/>

By the time students get to the end of the pathfinder (or the novel!), they may be interested in doing some whitewater rafting themselves. Although this site is based in New Zealand, they do provide U.S. contact information. I chose this site over others because it was one of the most visual, and had images of rafting boats on the first page. Tabs near the top of the page allow students to search also on kayaks and inflatable canoes.

## Other Resources

Hobbs, Will. *Downriver*, Dell Laurel-Leaf/RandomHouse Children's. 1996, c1991, 204 pp, ISBN 0-440-22673-2. Lexile 760.

No adults, no permit, no river map. Just some "borrowed" gear from Discovery Unlimited, the outdoor education program Jessie and her new companions have just ditched. Jessie and the others are having the time of their lives floating beneath sheer red walls, exploring unknown caves and dangerous waterfalls, and plunging through the Grand Canyon's roaring rapids. No one, including Troy, who emerges as the group's magnetic and ultimately frightening leader, can foresee the challenges and conflicts. Every time I teach this book, students tell me how much they hate to see it end. A great book for debates on core principles such as integrity, honesty and responsibility. It also includes enough low-level romance and related conflict to interest girls, and enough machismo and grossness to intrigue the boys.

Good Conversation! A Talk with Will Hobbs. videocassette. color. 20 min. Tim Podell Prods. 2001. ISBN 1-58543-049-8. \$49.98 (+\$5.10 s/h). Available from <http://shoptimpodellproductions.com/gco.html> .

For further information or questions, contact:

Stephanie Schene, Media Specialist  
MSD Perry Township  
Indianapolis, IN  
[saschene@msdpt.k12.in.us](mailto:saschene@msdpt.k12.in.us)