Bruce Upholdt’s “The Great River”

# A literary analysis

Reading a historical text like Upholdt’s on Fort Massac and the river differs from reading literary texts because it emphasizes facts, evidence, and historical context over themes and narrative style. When engaging with a historical text, readers focus on identifying key events, dates, and figures, using evidence from primary sources like maps, letters, and archaeological findings to support claims. In this type of reading, importance is often signaled through the connection of local events to broader national or global themes, such as military strategy, colonial expansion, or trade routes. Upholdt’s work provides a detailed account of the river’s significance, particularly in its role as a trade route, military defense line, and contested space between competing colonial powers.

Upholdt links the history of the river and Fort Massac to larger national themes, such as westward expansion, colonialism, and the displacement of Native Americans. The river’s strategic importance is highlighted through evidence like French military records and trade routes, as well as maps showing territorial shifts. In a walking tour, visitors could explore key landmarks, including the fort and river views, that demonstrate the river’s role in shaping local and national history. The tour would offer a tangible connection to the historical events, allowing visitors to reflect on the river’s importance in the context of colonial struggles, trade, and territorial control.