

If you only have 30 minutes ...

Investigate five American Cairos and synthesize how geography, resources and community identity shaped their different trajectories.

Text Mining (5 minutes)

Match each key characteristic with the correct Cairo City. Use the designated color for each line.¹

City / State (Color)
Cairo, Illinois (blue)
Cairo, Georgia (purple)
Cairo, West Virginia (brown)
Cairo, New York (red)
Cairo, Nebraska (green)

Key Characteristic
Once an oil boom town; after WWI, a thriving glass industry produced marbles.
Originally a farming community; residents gave up farming to build resorts.
Located on a vast prairie; known as “The Oasis of the Prairie.”
Has a long history linked to the Civil War
With a long growing season, produces diverse fruits and vegetables.

Text Analysis (20 minutes)

Using your completed chart and reading, fill in the table with text evidence and brief analysis. Cite Words, phrases or sentences directly from the article.

Focus Area	Guiding question	Text Evidence (from reading)
History	How did the role of Cairo, Illinois, ² in the Civil War connect to its later racial struggles?	
Agriculture	How does the location and climate of Cairo, Georgia, ³ support its agricultural success?	
Economic Transitions	What two industries shaped the economy of Cairo, West Virginia? ⁴ How did one decline lead to another's rise?	
Economic Transitions	How did Cairo, New York, ⁵ transform its land use as city dwellers discovered it?	
Geography	How did geography shape the identity of Cairo, Nebraska, ⁶ and its connection to Egypt?	

Synthesis (4 minutes)

1. How do these towns reflect different paths of American development?⁷
2. Why do their real histories differ from what the postcards show? Cite one example.⁸
3. Which Cairo story inspired you most—and why?⁹

Common Core Standard(s) Met:

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

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City / State (Color)	Key Characteristic
Cairo, Illinois (blue)	Once an oil boom town; after WWI, a thriving glass industry produced marbles.
Cairo, Georgia (purple)	Originally a farming <u>community</u> ; residents gave up farming to build resorts.
Cairo, West Virginia (brown)	Located on a vast prairie; known as "The Oasis of the Prairie."
Cairo, New York (red)	Has a long history linked to the Civil War
Cairo, Nebraska (green)	With a long growing season, produces diverse fruits and vegetables.

2 Civil War supply hub; later racial violence.

3 Fertile land, long growing season.

4 Oil boom → marble industry.

5 Shift from farming to tourism.

6 Prairie landscape and Egyptian symbolism.

7 Answers will vary but should mention different geographies and economies shaped distinct forms of American growth.

8 Answers will vary, but examples should demonstrate postcards presented optimistic images but omitted struggle, displacement or decline.

9 Answers will vary based on the Cairo that resonated with them personally.