Name: _____ Date: _____

Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

Circle group

In the early 1800s, moving heavy goods across New York was slow and cost a lot. Roads were bumpy. Wagons got stuck in mud. So workers dug a canal, a waterway made by people. The Erie Canal opened in 1825. It joined the Hudson River to Lake Erie. Boats could travel far inland.

Most of the digging was done by hand with shovels, and with horses and oxen to help. It took years.

A canal boat had no engine. A pair of mules or horses walked on a path by the water. The path is called the towpath. A long rope ran from the animals to the boat. They pulled it at a slow walk.

Sometimes the land went uphill. So builders made locks. A lock is a small room with gates. Water goes in or out, and the boat goes up or down like an elevator until it meets the next part of the canal.

Shipping by canal cost much less than by wagon. Towns by the canal grew fast.

Questions

1. When did the Erie Canal open?

_____

_____

2. Which two bodies of water did the canal join?

_____

_____

3. What pulled the canal boats?

_____

_____

4. What is a lock for?

_____

_____

5. Why did towns by the canal grow fast?

_____

_____

6. Why was moving goods by wagon hard before the canal?

_____

_____

Words to know

canal: a long waterway dug by people for boats
towpath: a path beside a canal where animals walked to pull boats
locks: chambers with gates that raise or lower boats on a canal
inland: away from the coast, toward the middle of the land

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

Triangle group

In the early 1800s, moving heavy goods across New York State was slow and costly. Roads were bumpy, and wagons got stuck in mud. So workers dug a canal, which is a waterway made by people. The Erie Canal opened in 1825. It joined the Hudson River with Lake Erie, so boats could travel a long way inland.

Most of the digging was done by hand, with shovels and with the help of horses and oxen. It took years of hard work.

A canal boat had no engine. Instead, a pair of mules or horses walked along a path beside the water, called the towpath. A long rope ran from the animals to the boat, and they pulled it along at a slow walking pace.

Sometimes the land rose uphill. To fix this, builders made locks. A lock is a small chamber with gates. Water is let in or out, and the boat rises or sinks like it is riding an elevator, until it is level with the next stretch of canal.

Shipping goods by canal cost much less than by wagon, and towns along the canal grew quickly.

Questions

1. When did the Erie Canal open?

_____

_____

2. Which two bodies of water did the canal join?

_____

_____

3. What pulled the canal boats along?

_____

_____

4. What is a lock used for?

_____

_____

5. Why did towns along the canal grow quickly?

_____

_____

6. Why was moving goods by wagon hard before the canal?

_____

_____

Words to know

canal: a long waterway dug by people for boats
towpath: a path beside a canal where animals walked to pull boats
locks: chambers with gates that raise or lower boats on a canal
inland: away from the coast, toward the middle of the land

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

Square group

In the early nineteenth century, transporting heavy goods across New York State was both slow and expensive. The roads were rough, and wagons frequently became stuck in the mud. To solve this problem, workers excavated a canal, which is a waterway constructed by people. The Erie Canal opened in 1825 and connected the Hudson River with Lake Erie, allowing boats to travel deep into the interior of the country.

Most of the excavation was accomplished by hand, using shovels and with the assistance of horses and oxen. The project required years of exhausting labor.

A canal boat carried no engine. Instead, a team of mules or horses walked along a path beside the water, known as the towpath, while a long rope stretched from the animals to the boat. Together they dragged it forward at a leisurely walking pace.

Occasionally the land sloped upward, and builders solved this obstacle with locks. A lock is a chamber with gates at each end. Water is released in or out, and the boat rises or sinks, much like an elevator, until it is level with the next section of canal.

Shipping goods by canal cost far less than hauling them by wagon, and towns along the route expanded rapidly.

Questions

1. In what year did the Erie Canal open?

_____

_____

2. Which two bodies of water were connected by the canal?

_____

_____

3. What moved the canal boats forward?

_____

_____

4. What is the purpose of a lock?

_____

_____

5. Why did towns along the canal expand so rapidly?

_____

_____

6. Why was transporting goods by wagon difficult before the canal?

_____

_____

Words to know

canal: a long waterway dug by people for boats
towpath: a path beside a canal where animals walked to pull boats
locks: chambers with gates that raise or lower boats on a canal

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

Easier · 170 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.7

1. In 1825.
2. The Hudson River and Lake Erie.
3. Mules or horses on the towpath.
4. It lifts or lowers a boat to match the next level of the canal.
5. Goods could be shipped cheaply, so trade came to those towns.
6. Roads were bumpy and wagons got stuck in mud.

Triangle: Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

This passage · 188 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.7

1. In 1825.
2. The Hudson River and Lake Erie.
3. Mules or horses walking on the towpath.
4. It lifts or lowers a boat so it matches the next level of the canal.
5. Goods could be shipped cheaply, so trade and business came to those towns.
6. Roads were bumpy and wagons got stuck in mud.

Square: Mules on the Towpath of the Erie Canal

Harder · 205 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.5

1. In 1825.
2. The Hudson River and Lake Erie.
3. Mules or horses walking along the towpath.
4. It raises or lowers a boat so it matches the next level of the canal.
5. Goods could be shipped cheaply, so trade and business came to those towns.
6. The roads were rough and wagons often got stuck in the mud.