Name: _____ Date: _____

How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

Circle group

In the early 1800s, travel inland from the coast was slow and cost a lot. Roads were rough. Wagons got stuck in mud. A farmer in western New York could grow lots of wheat but still earn little. Hauling it to market ate up most of the profit. People asked if a waterway could help.

The plan was a canal more than three hundred miles long. It would join the Hudson River at Albany to Lake Erie at Buffalo. Many people thought it could not be done. Work began in 1817. There were no modern machines. Workers dug with shovels and picks. Horses and oxen pulled scrapers and carts. Locks, which raise or lower a boat, helped the canal climb the land.

The canal opened in 1825. Boats floated on it. Mules and horses walked on a towpath beside the water and pulled the boats with long ropes. Shipping grain or lumber cost far less than by wagon.

Life changed fast. Farmers inland could reach eastern markets. City shops filled with goods from the state. Towns like Rochester and Syracuse grew by the canal. New York City became the busiest port in the country. Settlers could go west by boat for less money. One ditch changed how people worked and lived.

Questions

1. Why did a farmer in western New York earn little?

_____

_____

2. Which two waters did the canal join?

_____

_____

3. How was the canal dug?

_____

_____

4. What did a lock do?

_____

_____

5. Why did towns like Rochester and Syracuse grow?

_____

_____

6. Why did people doubt the canal could be built?

_____

_____

Words to know

inland: away from the coast
canal: a waterway dug by people for boats
locks: chambers on a canal that lift or lower boats
towpath: a path beside a canal where animals pulled boats

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: _____

How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

Triangle group

In the early 1800s, travel inland from the American coast was slow and costly. Roads were rough, and wagons got stuck in mud. A farmer in western New York could grow plenty of wheat but still earn little, since hauling it to a market town ate up most of the profit. People began asking whether a waterway might solve the problem.

The plan was to dig a canal more than three hundred miles long, joining the Hudson River at Albany to Lake Erie at Buffalo. Many people doubted it could be done. Construction began in 1817, and workers had no modern machines. They dug with shovels and picks, and horses and oxen pulled scrapers and carts. Locks, which are chambers that raise or lower a boat, helped the canal climb the land.

The canal opened in 1825. Boats floated along it while mules and horses walked on a towpath beside the water, pulling them with long ropes. Shipping a load of grain or lumber suddenly cost far less than it had by wagon.

The effects spread quickly. Farmers in the interior reached eastern markets, and city shops filled with goods from across the state. Towns such as Rochester and Syracuse grew around the canal, and New York City became the busiest port in the country. Settlers also traveled west by boat more cheaply than before. A single ditch had changed how people worked, traded, and lived.

Questions

1. Why was it hard for a farmer in western New York to earn money from wheat?

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

3. How was the canal dug?

_____

_____

4. What did a lock do?

_____

_____

5. Why did towns such as Rochester and Syracuse grow?

_____

_____

6. Why might people have doubted the canal could be built?

_____

_____

Words to know

inland: away from the coast
canal: a waterway dug by people for boats
locks: chambers on a canal that lift or lower boats
towpath: a path beside a canal where animals pulled boats
interior: the inside or middle part of a region

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: _____

How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

Square group

During the early 1800s, travel inland from the American coast was both slow and expensive. Roads were rough, and wagons frequently became mired in mud. A farmer in western New York might raise abundant wheat and yet earn very little, since hauling it to a market town consumed most of his profit. People began to wonder whether a waterway might offer a solution.

The proposal was to excavate a canal more than three hundred miles long, linking the Hudson River at Albany with Lake Erie at Buffalo. Many people doubted that such a project could ever be completed. Construction began in 1817, and the workers possessed no modern machinery whatsoever. They dug with shovels and picks, while horses and oxen drew scrapers and carts. Locks, which are chambers that raise or lower a boat, enabled the canal to climb the rising land.

The canal opened in 1825. Boats glided along it while mules and horses plodded on a towpath beside the water, pulling the vessels with long ropes. Shipping a load of grain or lumber suddenly cost far less than it had by wagon.

The consequences spread rapidly. Farmers in the interior gained access to eastern markets, and shops in the cities filled with goods from throughout the state. Towns such as Rochester and Syracuse prospered along the canal, and New York City became the busiest port in the nation. Settlers could also journey westward by boat at a much lower price than before. A single channel had transformed how people worked, traded, and lived.

Questions

1. Why could a farmer in western New York raise plenty of wheat yet earn very little?

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

3. How was the canal excavated?

_____

_____

4. What was the purpose of a lock?

_____

_____

5. Why did towns such as Rochester and Syracuse prosper?

_____

_____

6. Why might people have doubted that the canal could be completed?

_____

_____

Words to know

inland: away from the coast
canal: a waterway dug by people for boats
locks: chambers on a canal that lift or lower boats
towpath: a path beside a canal where animals pulled boats
interior: the inside or middle part of a region

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: How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

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

Circle: How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

Easier · 209 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.1

1. Hauling wheat over rough roads to market cost most of the profit.
2. The Hudson River and Lake Erie.
3. By hand with shovels and picks, with horses and oxen pulling scrapers and carts.
4. It raised or lowered boats so the canal could climb the land.
5. The canal brought trade and travelers, which gave people jobs.
6. It was very long and had to be dug without modern machines.

Triangle: How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

This passage · 234 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.4

1. Hauling the wheat over rough roads to market cost most of the profit.
2. The Hudson River and Lake Erie.
3. By hand with shovels and picks, with horses and oxen pulling scrapers and carts.
4. It raised or lowered boats so the canal could climb the land.
5. The canal brought trade and travelers, which gave people jobs and business.
6. It was very long and had to be dug without modern machines.

Square: How the Erie Canal Changed Life in New York

Harder · 253 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.1

1. Hauling it to a market town over rough roads used up most of his profit.
2. The Hudson River and Lake Erie.
3. By hand with shovels and picks, with horses and oxen drawing scrapers and carts.
4. It raised or lowered boats so the canal could climb the rising land.
5. The canal brought trade and travelers, which created jobs and business.
6. It was extremely long and had to be built without modern machinery.