

Erie Canal Research Projects

1. Calculate the distance a hoggee walks in one season from May to end of November by plotting the route of the canal on a map and attaching the equations for the distance. Write a piece describing the good and bad points of being a hoggee.
2. Illustrate a boat traveling through a lock by drawing a sequence scene for travel from high to low water and low to high water. Write a piece describing the steps you would follow as a lock tender.
3. "Interview" a hoggee and write up the information as an interview with questions and answers. Design a help wanted poster advertising for a hoggee.
4. Make an illustration of the "Wedding of the Waters" and write a newspaper article about the event.
5. Illustrate the various boats used on the canal and write a paragraph about each type of boat including dimensions and uses.
6. Contrast the original canal, the enlarged canal and the present barge canal by mapping the routes and designing a chart to compare and contrast the 3 canals.
7. Use graph paper to diagram the canal boats to scale and give their dimensions. Calculate the volume of each boat and write a paragraph about how you found the volume.
8. Inventory the cargo of boats traveling west on the canal with boats traveling east. Write a piece about how the Erie Canal affected cargo transportation in New York State.

9. Write and perform a song about the Erie Canal using the music from a tune most people know. Write a lesson plan about how to teach the song to the class and then teach it.

10. Invent a machine to help you build the canal. Draw the design and then make a 3D model of it. Write a piece about how the machine would make life easier for the workers.

11. Design an aqueduct out of materials and then write a piece about why aqueducts were important and locate the major aqueducts of the canal on a map of NY.

12. The Original Canal cost over \$7 million dollars to build it. Much of that money came from taxpayers who earned very little money per year. Write 2 editorials to the newspaper. One editorial will convince New Yorkers to vote yes for building the canal and the other to convince the voters to vote no. Then make a poster for either voting yes or no for building the canal.

13. Criticize DeWitt Clinton's idea for the canal by making a political cartoon about Clinton's Ditch. Write your thoughts that went into developing the cartoon and the meaning you hope people will have after looking at the cartoon.

14. Determine the reasons why the Erie Canal lost its popularity to the railroads and make a T-chart showing the differences. Then write a newspaper article to encourage business owners to change from canal shipping to railroad shipping.

15. Research one of the engineers of the canal such as Benjamin Wright, Nathan Roberts, James Geddes, and Canvas White. Make a timeline of their life and write a short biography.

16. Map the original lands of the Haudenosaunee and trace the route of the Original Erie Canal through their homelands. Then map the reservations of the Haudenosaunee during the time of the Erie Canal Era. Write a piece about the difference in land size and the treaties that allowed the canal to be built on former Haudenosaunee land.

17. Pretend you are an Irish immigrant helping to dig the canal. Write a letter back to you mother in Ireland describing the work, working conditions and pay. Include a sketch of some of the tools you use to build the canal.

18. Pretend you are a child of a boat owner. Make and illustrate an ABC book about what you see and do along the canal for your younger sibling to learn the alphabet.

19. The canal was finally complete in 1825 and a big celebration was started in Buffalo that continued on to Albany, stopping at every port city to celebrate the great feat of digging the canal 363 miles across New York State. Draw and label a picture of the boats in the parade starting in Buffalo. On the second boat were lots of New York state animals and two Seneca boys. Write a piece about how you think the boys felt and how you feel about it.

20. Investigate the locks at Lockport and make a model of them. Write a piece about how a boat would travel through them.

21. Make a table top model of the original canal indicating all the locks, aqueducts and major towns that were created along the route. Write a piece about the growth of these towns.

22. Pretend you are a mule working on the Erie Canal. Write a piece from the point of view of a mule about a day in your life. Illustrate your living quarters and how you get on and off the boat.
23. Ely Samuel Parker taught himself engineering at the age of 18 as he worked on the Enlarged Erie Canal. He soon became in charge of the whole canal system in Rochester. Write two acrostic poems using his name and his Seneca name, Hasanoanda. Then make a timeline of his life using photos.
24. There were many other boats traveling the canal other than boats carrying passengers and cargo. Identify 5 other types of boats and illustrate them. Write a caption about each boat.
25. Did the Erie Canal or a lateral canal (goes north or south off the original canal) have an impact on the Women's Rights Movement? Make a brochure about the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls that might convince people in Albany to attend. What methods of transportation might they use? Which would be the best method? When should they leave Albany to attend the meeting on time?
26. Was the Erie Canal used as part of the underground railroad? Pretend you are Harriet Tubman and using a map, plot a possible route of helping slaves escape from Maryland to Canada. How many miles would you travel and how long do you think it will take. Show your calculations and the route.
27. Pretend you are any person connected to the canal. Write a story about the impact or importance of the canal to your life. Dress up as the person and tell your story out loud to the class.