

The Transforming Effects of the Erie Canal

Document 1: Two Modes of Transportation

1. How does the canal boat move?
2. How does the river boat move?
3. What is larger, the canal or river boat?
4. What advantages does the canal boat have over the river boat?

Document 2: Convention Ribbon

1. What event is this ribbon for?
2. What do you think was the event's purpose?

3. Why would people hold this event?

Document 3: Digging the Canal

1. What tools are the men in this picture using?

2. What are the workers loading the dirt onto?

3. Why do you think these workers did this job?

Document 4: Red Line Packet Boat Ad

1. Where did the packet boat travel?

2. How do the owners of this boat describe it?

3. What type of cargo did packet boats carry?

4. Why might someone take a packet boat instead of a railroad?

Document 5: Apples at Medina

1. What cargo is this boat carrying?

2. Do you think this boat was carrying anything else? Why?

3. Look at the horse drawn carts in the background. Would you rather use a cart or a boat to transport goods? Why?

Document 6: Weight Discrepancy

1. How much did this boat weigh empty?

2. How much did the cargo on this boat weigh?

3. How did people on the canal determine the weight of the cargo?

Document 7: Postcard of Syracuse

1. Describe the building on the left side of the canal.
2. What do you think this building was used for?
3. Why are all the buildings so close to the canal?

Document 8: Picture from Oswego

1. What type of building is this?
2. What do you think it was used for?
3. How did the Erie Canal lead to its construction?

Document 9: The Old and the New

1. What forms of transportation can you see?
2. What is the more efficient form of transportation?
3. Why is this photo called “The Old and The New”?

Chose one of the following essay topics to answer using four of the above documents and at least one credible outside source:

- A. How did transportation technology change over the 19th century and how did it affect the growth of New York State?
- B. What impact did the Erie Canal have on the economy and development of communities along its banks?
- C. How were the lives of New Yorkers affected by the digging and operation of the Erie Canal?

Helpful Resources:

Erie Canal Museum: <https://eriecanalmuseum.org/>

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor: <https://eriecanalway.org/>

The Erie Canal: <http://eriecanal.org/>

New York State Canal Corporation: <http://www.canals.ny.gov/>

NY Canals: http://www.nycanals.com/Main_Page