

Lesson Plan #1  
The Erie Canal

Subject: Social Studies

Grade Level: 5-8

Classroom description: Approximately 25 students of various genders and abilities.

Topic: In the early 1800s, the Erie Canal opened up the frontier for trade from the East Coast. It connected the Hudson River with Lake Erie, which substantially reduced the amount of time it took to ship goods, as well as the cost of shipping. The impact of the canal includes the populating of the new frontier, the immigration of new ethnic groups away from the coast, and of course, the settlements that sprang up along its route due to the many new businesses that resulted from its completion.

Amount of Time Allowed for Lesson: 40 minutes class (\*Note: students should already have been introduced to the Erie Canal before completing this activity)

New York State Learning Standard(s): 1-United States History, 3-Geography, 4-Economics, 5-Civics, Citizenship and Government

National Educational Technology Standards: 3-Research and Information Fluency, 4-Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making, 5-Digital Citizenship, 6-Technology Operations and Concepts

Objective: The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the students to the Erie Canal.

- Students will be able to identify key cities along the route of the Erie Canal
- Students will be able to analyze primary sources of Erie Canal sites
- Students will be able to describe what life was like along the Erie Canal

Materials: Computer Lab, Internet, Erie Canal Worksheet, White Board/Markers, extra pencils

Anticipatory Set: The students will hear the song “Low Bridge.” The teacher will pass out the lyrics to “Low Bridge” and start the music once the students are settled into their seats. The song can be accessed via the following Web site

[http://ia331343.us.archive.org/2/items/BillyMurray\\_part3/BillyMurray-LowBridgeEverybodyDown.mp3](http://ia331343.us.archive.org/2/items/BillyMurray_part3/BillyMurray-LowBridgeEverybodyDown.mp3). The students will read along with the lyrics. The teacher will

ask the students, “Why do you think somebody would write a song about the Erie Canal?” A class discussion on the possibilities will follow.

Introduction: The teacher will begin the lesson by asking the following questions: “What do you think Buffalo was like 150 years ago?” “How did people and goods move from place to place 150 years ago?” The teacher will lead the students in a discussion on the Erie Canal. The teacher will then introduce the students to the day’s subject matter: The Erie Canal. The teacher may use the Monroe Fordham Regional History Center to conduct personal research on the Erie Canal.

Click on the following link to discover what sources concerning the Erie Canal are available at the center. [http://www.monroefordham.org/vertical%20files/Erie\\_Canal.html](http://www.monroefordham.org/vertical%20files/Erie_Canal.html)

Procedure: The students will be using the Internet to view Web sites devoted to the Erie Canal. They will answer questions on a work sheet as they enjoy a virtual tour of the Erie Canal.

1. Have the students go to the following Web site: <http://www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal/index.html#>

-The students should view the virtual tour first. Students should click on the “Launch Canal Tour” link. Once they have view the tour, they should continue exploring the site paying careful attention to the “Red Dot” route. Students should click on the various red dots and read the information and view the “Postcards” and “Panoramas” links to see primary source photographs from each area.

2. As the students view the site, they should complete the Erie Canal Worksheets. This is an independent activity and should be completed by the end of the class.

The teacher will walk around the room keeping the students on task and trouble-shooting any potential problems.

3. The teacher will review the worksheets and conduct a classroom discussion on the students’ answers.

Web site name(s) and address(es):

<http://www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal/index.html#>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erie\\_Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erie_Canal)

<http://www.eriecanal.org/locks.html>

Integration of computer technology: Technology will be integrated by student discover utilizing the Web sites listed above. The students will be able to see and hear primary source documents, maps and photographs while learning about the impact of the Erie Canal.

Special accommodation(s) for at-risk, special education, gifted: Extended time allotted per individual student IEP. Gifted students may wish to further their research by viewing the following site to learn how the canal locks work: <http://www.eriecanal.org/locks.html>.

Assessment: Students will be assessed based upon their participation in the classroom activity and discussion. Students will be assessed based upon the completion of the Erie Canal worksheet with an emphasis on creativity, structure and relevance of answer to the question presented with an emphasis on the following criteria:

-Did the students understand what the lesson was about?

-Did the students reach the objective?

The teacher will you check for understanding during the lesson by asking the students questions based upon their progress on their worksheets. The teacher will determine the desired learning outcomes (instructional objectives) have been met by reviewing the students' answers to the worksheet at the end of class.

Closure: The teacher will end the lesson by saying, "Today we discovered what life was like along the Erie Canal. We looked at primary sources of Erie Canal sites and discovered some of the key cities along the route of the Erie Canal. I want you to think about why the Erie Canal is no longer used as a major shipping network today and for homework, I want you to list 3 reasons why you think that is so."

The lesson will not be continued during the next class.

Transition to next lesson: The teacher will prepare for a smooth transition to the next lesson by creating a "teachable moment" that includes the opportunity for the students to engage in a discussion concerning the homework question.

Extensions/homework: The students will hand in a half sheet of paper with Three Reasons Why the Erie Canal is No Longer Used as a Major Shipping Network Today.

Lesson Plan References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erie\\_Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erie_Canal)

<http://www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal/index.html#>

<http://www.eriecanal.org/locks.html>

<http://monroefordham.org>

Mule Clipart: <http://www.freeclipartnow.com/animals/donkeys/wild-ass.jpg.html>

Worksheet Answer Key

1. a complicated system of rivers and roadways
2. 363 miles
3. the Hudson River and Lake Erie
4. they were pulled by mules
5. varied depending on the song selected

## “Low Bridge (Erie Canal)”

By Thomas S. Allen (1905)

I've got an old mule and her name is Sal  
Fifteen years on the Erie Canal  
She's a good old worker and a good old pal  
Fifteen years on the Erie Canal  
We've hauled some barges in our day  
Filled with lumber, coal, and hay  
And every inch of the way we know  
From Albany to Buffalo

*Chorus:*

Low bridge, everybody down  
Low bridge for we're coming to a town  
And you'll always know your neighbor  
And you'll always know your pal  
If you've ever navigated on the Erie Canal

We'd better get along on our way, old gal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
'Cause you bet your life I'd never part with Sal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
Git up there mule, here comes a lock  
We'll make Rome 'bout six o'clock  
One more trip and back we'll go  
Right back home to Buffalo

*Chorus*

Oh, where would I be if I lost my pal?  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
Oh, I'd like to see a mule as good as Sal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
A friend of mine once got her sore  
Now he's got a busted jaw  
Cause she low

*Chorus*

Don't have to call when I want my Sal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
She trots from her stall like a good old gal  
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal  
I eat my meals with Sal each day  
I eat beef and she eats hay  
And she ain't so slow if you want to know  
She put the "Buff" in Buffalo

*Chorus*

I've got an old mule and her name is Sal  
Fifteen years on the Erie Canal  
She's a good old worker and a good old pal  
Fifteen years on the Erie Canal  
We've hauled some barges in our day  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Life on the Erie Canal Worksheet

*Directions:* Answer the following questions while reviewing the following Erie Canal Web site:

<http://www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal/index.html#>

1. How did people ship goods before the completion of the Erie Canal?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How many miles long was the Erie Canal?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What two bodies of water did the Erie Canal connect?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How did boats travel through the canal?

\_\_\_\_\_

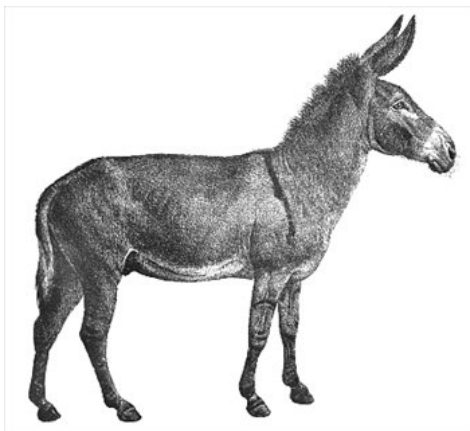
5. Listen to some of the songs under the “Canal Songs” tab. Choose your favorite song and list three facts about life on the canal that you learned from the song:

Song Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



If you finish before the rest of the class,  
please explore the Erie Canal Locks:

<http://www.eriecanal.org/locks.html>