

**Topic:** Introduction to the Erie Canal

**Issue:** Summer 2025

**NYS Social Studies Framework:**

- 4.6b In order to connect the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean, the Erie Canal was built.
  - Students will examine the physical features of New York State and determine where it might be easiest to build a canal, and form a hypothesis about the best location. Students will compare their hypothesis with the actual location of the Erie Canal.
- 7.6c Westward expansion provided opportunities for some groups while harming others.

**NYS Next Generation ELA Learning Standards:**

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/nys-next-generation-ela-standards.pdf>

Grades 4 & 5 R1, R4, R8. Grades 6-8 R1, R4. Grades 4-8 W1.

**Notes about icons:**



This icon is paired with observation questions to help student's remember that to observe is to just look at what is in the document.



This icon is paired with inference questions to help students remember that to infer is to use what they observed paired with their own background knowledge to draw a conclusion.



This icon is paired with questions that require thinking about the worldview of those involved. This is to remind students to put on their "Worldview Glasses" and see things from the point of view of the people involved.



This icon is paired with questions that ask students to synthesize information from more than one source.

**Understanding the Online Resources:**

- Take a Closer Look & Learning Activity Differentiated - activities that use the same documents as in the print version, but are scaled more to 7th grade.
- Learning Activity Extensions - resources that are directly related to the Learning Activity on page 4 of the magazine.
- Learning Activity Extras - resources that are related to the topic, but can be done separately.
- Document Teaching Resources - resources that are standard and could be used with any any issue.

**Big Ideas in this Issue:** Supporters of the Erie Canal believed it would make transportation faster and cheaper, open up Western New York and beyond for easier settlement and make NYC the largest trading port in the US. The Erie Canal was begun in 1817, and was completed in 1825. This event was much celebrated.

## Activities in this Issue

### Page 3 - “Take a Closer Look”

“The Marriage of the Waters” - Students will use the information from the text to help them make inferences about the painting. The painting is of DeWitt Clinton pouring the water from Lake Erie into the Atlantic Ocean after traveling the length of the entire canal, down the Hudson to NYC. He did this to symbolize the joining of these two bodies of water via the canal.

### Page 4 - “Learning Activity”

This document is a broadside outlining the festivities for the opening of the canal. Articles had been written in the newspaper encouraging towns to host their own events to complement the flotilla led by the Seneca Chief and DeWitt Clinton. Students can practice pulling information from an historic document by finding basic information and completing the chart. There is a larger version of the chart and lined paper with the written response question in the online resources to make writing easier.

### Learning Activity Extensions - Online

- **Broadside Symbolism.** This activity has students taking a look at the three symbols at the top of the broadside. The answer key provides an explanation. In fourth grade this would most likely need to be a guided activity.
- **Now It’s Your Turn!** Students can use this page to outline a real or imagined community event and create a broadside for it. The page provided is to get them thinking about all the needed information. The broadside itself could be a hand-drawn or digital poster.

### Learning Activity Extras - Online

- **Pre-Learning** - “Where to Put a Canal?” Before reading, have students look at the landform map of New York State. Thinking about the landforms, have students draw a line to show the best location for a canal to be dug. Discuss why certain landforms would make sense for a canal, and those that would make a canal impossible. More with this map can be found at Consider the Source NY <https://considerthesourcenyc.org/activity/elevations-new-york-state>. **NOTE:** This activity is called out in the NYS Framework.
- Larger format chart for answering questions about the broadside.
- Lined paper with written response question from the magazine page printed on it.



# Connections

## ELA:

### Books

- *The Amazing Impossible Erie Canal* by Cheryl Harness
- *The Erie Canal* by Peter Spier
- *The Erie Canal* by Martha E. Kendall
- *The Story of the Erie Canal Just for Kids* by Sarah Michaels
- *The Erie Canal* by Andrew Santella (from the We the People series)
- *Building the Erie Canal* by Linda Thompson (from the History of America series)
- *Hoggee* by Anna Myers - makes a great read aloud

## Websites:

- <https://eriecanalway.org/learn/history-culture> The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
- <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/history-of-the-ohio-erie-canal.htm> National Park Service: History of the Ohio and Erie Canal
- The Erie Canal Museum - <https://eriecanalmuseum.org/>

## Virtual Field Trip:

- Experience the Erie Canal Corridor in 360\* by National Parks - <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/erie-canalway-360.htm>
- The New York State Museum: Traveling the Erie Canal - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LJtUg3Xq1g>

## Video:

- .Erie Canal Locks, Time Lapsed - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7\\_Hr3iCPls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7_Hr3iCPls)
- DeWitt Clinton and the Erie Canal by PBS - <https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/dewitt-clinton-erie-canal-video/new-york-documentary-film/>

## Music:

- “The Meeting of the Waters of the Erie and Hudson” by S. Woodworth, sung by William Hullfish and the Golden Eagle String Band. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaFo2VJ6mG4>
- “Low Bridge” aka “The Erie Canal Song” (“...15 miles on the Erie Canal!”) - [https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-e&sca\\_esv=19d3299ba164400b&channel=entpr&udm=7&sxsrf=AHTn8zrSZhs4pic9Fn3cxOBpCRtJ8enNsg:1746039103618&q=15+miles+on+the+erie+canal+song&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi42qPEtoCNAxU8toQIHUpFEjMQ8ccDKAF6BAG6EAI&biw=1920&bih=927&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:c58bed60,vid:HcNJ2RMod3U,st:0](https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-e&sca_esv=19d3299ba164400b&channel=entpr&udm=7&sxsrf=AHTn8zrSZhs4pic9Fn3cxOBpCRtJ8enNsg:1746039103618&q=15+miles+on+the+erie+canal+song&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi42qPEtoCNAxU8toQIHUpFEjMQ8ccDKAF6BAG6EAI&biw=1920&bih=927&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:c58bed60,vid:HcNJ2RMod3U,st:0)