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Writing Assignment:

- Have students undergo a virtual journey on the Erie Canal by watching the "Time Lapse Through the Erie Canal" below and stopping the video at each lock, barge, bridge, etc. to be the tour guide and ask the students what each represents and what they do. To really get the students engaged, align the desk into two columns in front of the SMART board or projector, or have student sit on the floor in two rows and "row" the boat with rows that they construct out of classroom supplies. Have students stop along the way for snack breaks, water breaks, and bathroom breaks. After viewing the video, have students engage in writing journal entries that describe what they saw, heard, smelled, and felt along the trip. For example, was it tedious, boring, engaging, strenuous, interesting, etc. In these journals, students will be required to define a minimum of four vocabulary words (such as lock, barge, bridge, canal, etc.). This activity could even be broken into several days, where student are asked to complete several different journals that also include what they expect to happen the next day (what they expect to see, how they anticipate to feel, what could be improved upon, etc.).

How the Erie Canal Contributed to the Growth of the United States:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LePSeCHfKIQ>

Time Lapse through the Erie Canal:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRmbjfPaSXU>

Erie Canal Lock Time Lapse:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7_Hr3iCPls

Preview Activities:

- Sing about the Erie Canal: Students are given handouts of the lyrics to "The Erie Canal Song". As they listen to the song as a class, students will note key vocabulary words and important facts. After students have sung the song a few times and seen pictures of each feature (locks, barges, boats, canals, etc.) students will annotate a copy of the song in their Social Studies notebooks with a drawing of each feature mentioned in the song and provide a brief description/definition of the feature if possible.

- Use a Graph to Predict Canal Trends: As a preview to the unit that is to come, have students view a graph of the average number of people that used the Erie Canal (whether it be for transportation, leisure, trade, travel, etc.) at the time of its creation in 1817, its first use in 1821, when it was completed in 1825, twenty five years later in 1850, 1900, 1950, and when it was restored in 1996. Then, have students hypothesize why this may be the trend in use over time, and what changes may or may not have led to this change. Then have them predict what the rate of use of the canal is currently, and have them back their answers up with reasonable hypotheses rooted in factual and experiential evidence.
- Understanding What a Dilemma Is: The purpose of this activity is to have students learn what a dilemma truly is. To do this, students will be asked to imagine that they are on a boat traveling down a canal that is about to switch from water of high depth to water of low depth (shallow water). Faced with this dilemma, students will be asked to work in small groups to come to a single conclusion/resolution to their problem. After five to ten minutes of engaging discussion, ask the groups to present their findings/solutions to the class, and why/how they chose the answer that they did. After all groups have presented, show them the video below to show them that a lock is a device used for raising and lowering boats between stretches of water of different levels on river and canal waterways.
<http://www.eriecanal.org/locks.html>

Reading Note:

- Reading: Have students read the following article to get a brief background on the Erie Canal. If students have access to computers they may view an interactive video clip and slide show at the same website to supplement the lesson.
- Reading Notes: Upon reading the article, students will be asked to analyze what they read by annotating an ad for a travel agency, encouraging tourists to visit the Erie Canal. For instance, they can fill out a flyer urging individuals to visit the Erie Canal and explore all that is has to offer, or they can create an invitation or poster urging others to explore the many attractions of the Erie Canal. All ads must include a brief historical background along with a minimum of five reasons as to why people should visit the Erie Canal. For more advanced students, have them complete the same project, however, in the past. For instance, have students illustrate a flyer dating back to the time of the Erie Canal's opening, urging citizens to come explore the Erie Canal!

<http://www.westernny.com/erie.html>

https://www.pbs.org/wnet/newyork/laic/episode1/topic7/e1_t7_s1-ec.html

Processing Assignments:

- Proclamation Scrolls: Have students list ways in which they will contribute to the success/longevity of the Erie Canal (through community clean up, not polluting, donating, community service, etc.). Students must state a minimum of 8 things that they "intend" to do to help better the Erie Canal.

- Community Service Awards: Students must create an award to honor another person who has made a significant contribution to the Erie Canal's success/longevity. This person can be deceased or living. For instance, students could write to Mayor DeWitt Clinton, a worker who helped construct the Erie Canal, a president and/or public figure that fought for the Erie Canal, an individual that donated to the Erie Canal, a historian, a current canal employee, and/or someone they personally know that has contributed to the success of the Erie Canal. Upon completion, students will share their finished awards with the class to illustrate just how many people have contributed to the success of the Erie Canal, and to illustrate that everyday individuals can have just as big of an impact on something as a government official.
- Have students create travel brochures for the Erie Canal for communities to read about, that encourage tourists to come visit and explore the wonders of the Erie Canal. To do this, have students each illustrate a map of the Erie Canal spanning from Albany to Buffalo in which students must create a key that illustrates geographical features such as mountains, bodies of water, major cities, natural resources, climate, etc. The completed brochure should include a brief history of the canal, a minimum of ten reasons to visit the canal, particular sights to see/activities to do when visiting the canal, information on how to visit the canal (sources such as informational websites), why the Erie Canal is such a beautiful sight, when to visit, etc.).

Common Core/Essential Questions:

Reading Standards for Informational Text: Grade 4:

1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
2. Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Craft and Structure:

4. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain specific words or phrases in a text relevant to grade 4 topic or subject area.
5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

Reading Standards: Foundational Skills: Grade 4:

Phonics and Word Recognition:

3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis in decoding words.
4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
 - a) Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

Writing Standards: Grade 4:

Text Types and Purposes:

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
 - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
 - b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
 - c. Link opinions and reasons using words and phrases (e.g. for instance, in order to, in addition).
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- b. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- c. Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources, take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.