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>