

Lesson 19

Farmington Canal

How was the Farmington Canal built?
How did boats travel on the canal?
Do you know about other canals?

GOAL To understand that the Farmington canal was a major undertaking

OBJECTIVES Students will:

- ✓ learn facts about the Farmington Canal
- ✓ create a drawing of the canal from a worker on a boat's perspective
- ✓ write a story about the canal

MATERIALS Farmington Canal map (on CD), poster board or butcher block paper, markers, crayons, pencil, paper

CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS

- Language Arts 1(1,7), 4(5)
- Science 8(7,8), 14(2,5)
- Social Studies 1(1-4), 2(1,2), 3(6,7), 9(1-6), 11(6), 12(5-8)
- Arts 1(3,4), 4(1-3)

VOCABULARY canal, man-made, natural, booming, structure, locks

PROCEDURES

1. Begin by asking students if they know what a canal is. Ask if it is a man-made or natural structure.
2. Determine if students are familiar with any canals in the U.S. or any other country.
3. Explain that there was a canal built in Connecticut in the 1800's from New Haven, CT to Northampton, MA. It was called the Farmington Canal.
4. Have students view Farmington Canal map (on CD) to determine length and route of canal.

Farmington River Watershed Education Curriculum: Elementary

5. Provide the following facts about the canal:
 - a. early 1800's – Hartford and Middletown enjoying wealth because of CT River - booming
 - b. sell goods and ship via boats and barges
 - c. New Haven receiving goods from West Indies – wanted to trade with rural areas
 - d. Decided to build canal from New Haven to Mass to trade goods with other areas
 - e. 4 feet deep, 20 feet wide and 80 miles long
 - f. tools were shovels, wheelbarrows, picks
 - g. 1822 – 17 towns agreed to project – sold stock to finance
 - h. 1828 – completed - *James Hillhouse* – first boat to travel
 - i. finished construction to Northampton, MA in 1835 – 10 years later
 - j. soil was sandy loam and rock – did not hold water very well
 - k. costs more than expected, so costs cut in canal banks
 - l. banks washed out during storm
 - m. drought in 1843 closed canal four months; ice blocked canal
 - n. land taken from landholders – lawsuits files
 - o. streams blocked so water did not flow
 - p. bridges constructed over canal that cut through farms – hard for wagons to cross
 - q. canal leaked making pastures swamps
 - r. locks on route (mechanism to lift boats)
 - s. canal boats powered by horses – tow path next to canal
 - t. no steamboat traffic
 - u. interesting for public to watch – means of travel for some
 - v. repairs very costly in 1830's
 - w. 1847 – railbed constructed replacing canal
 - x. now area converted to a park area
6. Break up students into smaller groups. Distribute poster board or butcher block paper.
7. Have students draw the canal's route. Instruct them to imagine they worked on a boat and had to travel on the canal. Describe in words how the horses had to tow the boats and canal locks lifted boats. Have students use the facts above to describe the travels of this worker. Have students draw scenery along the canal on poster board.

EXTENSIONS

1. Make a three-dimensional model of a canal and describe to class.
2. Conduct research on a canal from a different area.

RESOURCES

<http://www.kelseypub.com/ct-guide/historic/farmcanl.shtml>

GLOSSARY

booming - to grow, develop, or progress rapidly; flourish

canal - an artificial waterway or artificially improved waterway used for travel, shipping or irrigation

locks - a section of a waterway, such as a canal, closed off with gates, in which vessels in transit are raised or lowered by raising or lowering the water level of that section

man-made - made by humans rather than occurring in nature; synthetic

natural - present in or produced by nature

structure - the way in which parts are arranged or put together to form a whole