A Canal Changes

Trace how supporting ideas build a central idea in an informational text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.2 "Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence in each paragraph that helps develop the central idea. Number the underlined sentences 1, 2, and 3 to show how the ideas build across the text.

The Erie Canal's Wide Effects

(1) In 1817, New York began building the Erie Canal, a 363-mile waterway between the Hudson River at Albany and Lake Erie at Buffalo. At the time, mountains and forests made travel west slow and expensive. Engineers had to cut through rock, cross rivers, and build locks, chambers that raised or lowered boats as the land changed height. When the canal opened in 1825, it gave farmers and merchants a direct route between the Great Lakes region and the Atlantic Ocean.

(2) The new route quickly changed trade. Before the canal, shipping a load of goods across land could cost far more than moving it by water. Canal boats carried flour, timber, and other products east, while manufactured goods traveled west. Towns such as Rochester grew beside the waterway because mills, shops, and workers could receive supplies and send products to distant markets. The canal did not merely shorten a trip. It connected local businesses to a much larger economy.

(3) The canal also shaped where people lived and how the nation expanded. Settlers used it to reach western New York and states beyond the Great Lakes, and some Native American communities faced increased pressure as newcomers claimed land. Its success encouraged other canal projects, though railroads later carried people and freight more quickly. The Erie Canal's story shows that a transportation project can do more than move cargo. It can alter trade, population patterns, and the choices communities face.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the central idea of the passage?

2. What supporting idea does paragraph 1 provide, and how does it support the central idea?

3. How does paragraph 2 develop the idea beyond what paragraph 1 explains?

4. What new dimension does paragraph 3 add to the central idea? Explain why this detail matters in an objective summary.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 80 word objective summary of the passage. State the central idea and include one accurate detail from each paragraph, but do not add your opinion.

ANSWER KEY

A Canal Changes

GRADE 8 · RI.8.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence in each paragraph that helps develop the central idea. Number the underlined sentences 1, 2, and 3 to show how the ideas build across the text. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the central idea of the passage?	**The Erie Canal changed trade and settlement, showing that transportation projects can have wide economic and social effects.**
2	What supporting idea does paragraph 1 provide, and how does it support the central idea?	**Paragraph 1 explains that the canal overcame difficult land travel and connected the Great Lakes region to the Atlantic, creating the route that made later changes possible.**
3	How does paragraph 2 develop the idea beyond what paragraph 1 explains?	**Paragraph 2 shows the economic results of the new route: cheaper water shipping increased trade, connected businesses to distant markets, and helped towns such as Rochester grow.**
4	What new dimension does paragraph 3 add to the central idea? Explain why this detail matters in an objective summary.	**Paragraph 3 adds effects on settlement, Native American communities, and later transportation. It shows that the canal affected people and communities, not only business and trade.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Erie Canal transformed connections between the Great Lakes region and the Atlantic. Completed in 1825, its locks and water route overcame difficult land travel. Cheaper water shipping expanded trade and helped towns such as Rochester grow. The canal also influenced western settlement, increased pressure on some Native American communities, and inspired other canals before railroads became faster transportation. This history shows how transportation projects can change economies and population patterns.

Accept central ideas that connect the canal's transportation route to its economic and social effects. Objective summaries should be accurate, neutral, and include the central idea plus details from all three paragraphs without becoming a list of minor facts.