

Canal Connections

Track how transitions guide an explanation from need to impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.2c "Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline every word or phrase that signals a relationship among ideas. Then number the sentences that introduce the background, construction, and effects sections as 1, 2, and 3.

A Waterway That Connected Markets

- ① In the early 1800s, moving goods across the United States was slow and expensive. Farmers in the Great Lakes region could send crops east by wagon, but rough roads and mountain barriers raised costs. Meanwhile, New York City wanted a stronger trade connection to western communities. These needs led state leaders to propose a canal between the Hudson River and Lake Erie. Critics called the plan "Clinton's Folly," doubting that workers could cut a 363-mile waterway. Yet the proposed route promised to link inland farms with Atlantic markets.
- ② Construction began in 1817, and the project demanded more than digging a long ditch. Engineers designed locks, chambers that raised or lowered boats as the land changed elevation. In addition, crews built aqueducts to carry the canal over rivers and used new tools to cut through rock. The work was dangerous, and many laborers were Irish immigrants. After eight years, the canal opened in 1825. A ceremonial boat traveled from Buffalo to New York City, where Governor DeWitt Clinton poured Lake Erie water into New York Harbor. The opening, therefore, showed both an engineering achievement and a public claim that the state could connect distant regions.

- ③ The canal quickly changed the flow of trade. Because freight could move more cheaply by water, farmers and merchants sent larger amounts of grain, lumber, and other goods east. In turn, manufactured products traveled west, while towns such as Rochester and Buffalo grew along the route. However, the canal did not benefit everyone equally: it helped New York become a commercial center while redirecting trade away from some older routes. Later railroads offered faster transportation, so the canal lost some importance. Even so, its early success demonstrated how a transportation project could reshape settlement, business, and political power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① What cause-and-effect relationship does the sentence beginning “These needs led” clarify in paragraph 1?

- ② How does the transition “In addition” help connect the ideas in paragraph 2?

- ③ What idea does “However” introduce in paragraph 3, and how does it change the discussion of the canal’s benefits?

- ④ Compare “Later” and “Even so” near the end of paragraph 3. What relationship does each transition show?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Using the passage as your historical source, write a 120-150-word explanation of how the Erie Canal connected transportation needs, engineering choices and changes in trade. Develop three paragraphs and use at least four transitions showing sequence, addition, cause or effect, and contrast or qualification. Include a compound sentence, a complex sentence, and a limitation on the canal's benefits.

Write and check three paragraphs

Explain the historical relationships in your own words, using evidence rather than copying three passage paragraphs. Make each transition connect ideas accurately. Check the compound and complex sentences, acknowledge uneven or changing benefits, and keep all three paragraphs within 120-150 words.

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PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline every word or phrase that signals a relationship among ideas. Then number the sentences that introduce the background, construction, and effects sections as 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What cause-and-effect relationship does the sentence beginning “These needs led” clarify in paragraph 1?	High transportation costs and New York City’s desire for western trade led state leaders to propose the canal.
2	How does the transition “In addition” help connect the ideas in paragraph 2?	It adds aqueducts and rock-cutting tools as more examples of the engineering work, following the explanation of locks.
3	What idea does “However” introduce in paragraph 3, and how does it change the discussion of the canal’s benefits?	It introduces a contrast by explaining that the canal’s benefits were unequal and that some older trade routes lost business.
4	Compare “Later” and “Even so” near the end of paragraph 3. What relationship does each transition show?	“Later” shows time and introduces the rise of railroads. “Even so” shows concession by emphasizing the canal’s lasting significance despite losing importance.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Historical explanation: First, the Erie Canal addressed an expensive transportation problem. Because rough roads and mountain barriers made overland shipping difficult, New York leaders sought a water connection between Lake Erie and the Hudson River. The proposed route would connect inland farms with eastern markets.

Next, construction turned that goal into an engineering challenge. Locks handled changes in elevation, and aqueducts carried the waterway across rivers. In addition to these structures, crews needed tools for cutting rock. Work began in 1817, and the canal opened in 1825.

Consequently, cheaper water transport helped move farm products east and manufactured goods west. However, the gains were uneven, since some older trade routes lost business. Although railroads later reduced the canal’s importance, its early success showed how transportation could reorganize trade and encourage towns to grow.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Require three real paragraphs, 120-150 words, historically accurate evidence from the passage, four transition relationships, and both compound and complex sentences. The model's First/Next signal sequence, Because/Consequently cause and effect, In addition adds an engineering feature, and However/Although qualify benefits. 'Locks handled changes in elevation, and aqueducts carried the waterway across rivers' is compound. The sentence beginning Because is complex. Do not invent numerical savings or claim universal benefit. The final paragraph qualifies change rather than recommending a modern school policy. Historical sources: National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/the-erie-canal.htm>; New York State Canal Corporation, <https://www.canals.ny.gov/About/History>.