

## Teaching Strategies and Resources

*Erie Canal for the Classroom* is an inquiry-based unit aligned with the New York State Social Studies Standards and Practices for Grade 4. Teachers will find the following strategies and resources useful in implementing this unit:

- 1. Inquiry**

**Harvard's Project Zero Visible Thinking Routines**

- 2. Grouping**

- 3. Formative and Summative Assessment**

- 4. Teaching through Primary Sources**

- 5. Accessing Primary Sources**

**Rochester Public Library's Rochester Voices Website**

### 1. INQUIRY

Inquiry is the primary pedagogical approach used to implement the New York State Social Studies Framework and thus the primary strategy for the lessons in the *Erie Canal for the Classroom* unit.

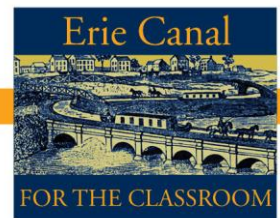
*Inquiry is:*

- Exploring, investigating, researching, and wondering
- Investigating multiple points-of-view
- Collecting, interpreting, analyzing and presenting evidence/conclusions
- Playing with ideas
- Asking questions and finding answers, which may lead to new questions
- Making connections to background knowledge
- Purpose-based
- Discovering and uncovering

*Inquiry is not:*

- A student free-for-all
- Memorization
- Only letting students learn whatever they choose
- Teacher-led as the primary teaching approach
- Used for all learning
- Disconnected themes and topics
- Fact-driven learning

Inquiry involves the teacher posing questions, an enduring understanding, and/or concepts and then allowing students to make meaning by investigating and connecting new understandings to previous learning. Teachers may act as a facilitator, guide, observer, and/or learner,



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depending on the level of support students need at each point in the investigation. Inquiry is about the teacher letting go of “right answers” and allowing students to develop multiple solutions and conclusions.

Teachers will find helpful strategies and resources for inquiry-based teaching on **Harvard’s Project Zero** website: <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/>. The Thinking Routines found on this site are designed to guide students through active thought processing. Many of these routines are used in the *Erie Canal for the Classroom* lessons, including:

- I used to think... Now I think...
- See Think Wonder
- Think Pair Share
- Headlines
- What Makes You Say That?

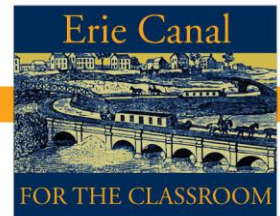
### 2. GROUPING

Each lesson in the *Erie Canal for the Classroom* unit allows for multiple opportunities for students to work independently or in groups of various composition, including whole-class inquiry, work in pairs, and group work with three, four, or five students. These lessons all lend themselves to strategic grouping with either social or academic goals in mind. Teachers might also consider using Visibly Random Grouping strategies in which students see the teacher assign them to groups at random. For more on the benefits of Visibly Random Grouping, see Peter Liljedahl’s work, <http://www.peterliljedahl.com/wp-content/uploads/Visibly-Random-Groups.pdf>.

### 3. FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Formative assessments are check-ins conducted during teaching to see how student learning is progressing. Formative assessment is a quick snapshot of information that helps the teacher determine whether the student has gaps, weaknesses, misunderstandings, or deficiencies in their understanding. It can also help teachers determine whether they need to adjust their lesson delivery based on student needs. Some formative assessment strategies include teacher observation, quizzes, projects, exit tickets, written reflections, class polls, conferences, self-evaluations, and question/answer sessions. Typically, formative assessment focuses on the learning process that is taking place.

Summative assessments occur when the learning comes to a formal end. Even though the concept, skill, or content may repeat at another point, summative assessment provides the teacher with data that shows how well the student has understood what was taught. Some summative assessment strategies include compare/contrast papers, projects that demand application or synthesis of new material, scenarios of solutions to posed problems, unit tests,



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performances, and portfolios. Typically, summative assessment focuses on the final output by a student sharing their understanding in product form.

The *Erie Canal for the Classroom* unit includes both formative and summative assessments to help teachers track student learning.

### 4. TEACHING THROUGH PRIMARY SOURCES

A key component of the New York State Social Studies Framework is developing student ability to gather information and build understanding through analyzing and interpreting primary source documents. To support this goal, the *Erie Canal for the Classroom* unit incorporates an abundance of primary sources from local historical collections at the Rochester Public Library and its partner institutions.

The following information about using primary sources to teach history comes from the Library of Congress website, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html>.

#### Why Use Primary Sources?

Primary sources provide a window into the past—unfiltered access to the record of artistic, social, scientific, and political thought and achievement during the specific period under study, produced by people who lived during that period.

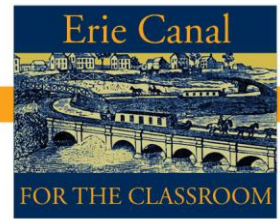
Bringing young people into close contact with these unique, often profoundly personal, documents and objects can give them a very real sense of what it was like to be alive during a long-past era.

#### *Engage students*

- Primary sources help students relate in a personal way to events of the past and promote a deeper understanding of history as a series of human events.
- Because primary sources are snippets of history, they encourage students to seek additional evidence through research.
- First-person accounts of events help make them more real, fostering active reading and response.

#### *Develop critical thinking skills*

- Many state standards support teaching with primary sources, which require students to be both critical and analytical as they read and examine documents and objects.
- Primary sources are often incomplete and have little context. Students must use prior knowledge and work with multiple primary sources to find patterns.
- In analyzing primary sources, students move from concrete observations and facts to questioning and making inferences about the materials.



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- Questions of creator bias, purpose, and point of view may challenge students' assumptions.

### **Construct knowledge**

- Inquiry into primary sources encourages students to wrestle with contradictions and compare multiple sources that represent differing points of view, confronting the complexity of the past.
- Students construct knowledge as they form reasoned conclusions, base their conclusions on evidence, and connect primary sources to the context in which they were created, synthesizing information from multiple sources.
- Integrating what they glean from comparing primary sources with what they already know, and what they learn from research, allows students to construct content knowledge and deepen understanding.

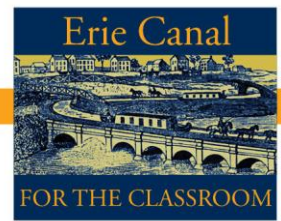
## **5. ACCESSING PRIMARY SOURCES**

Most of the primary sources used in the *Erie Canal for the Classroom* unit are provided within the lessons or available in the Erie Canal topic section of the **Rochester Public Library's Rochester Voices website**, <http://www.rochestervoices.org/>.

*Rochester Voices* is an award-winning website designed to engage a K-12 audience, as well as the general public, in the study of local, state, national, and even global history through collections, topics, timelines, exhibits, and classroom resources that allow users to discover and explore primary sources that capture the stories of Rochester's past, and to interact with these unique historical materials in a variety of exciting ways. Curated by historians and educators, *Rochester Voices* is aligned with the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies.

Other online resources where teachers can access historical primary sources include:

- *Rochester Images*. A database that includes thousands of historical and contemporary images from Rochester and Monroe County (NY). Access through the Rochester Public Library's website, <https://roccitylibrary.org/rochester-images/>.
- Digital collections from the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library. Access through the library's website, <https://roccitylibrary.org/digital-collections/>.
- *New York Heritage Digital Collections*. A research portal through which teachers and students can access collections of historical, scholarly, and cultural materials held in libraries, museums, and archives throughout New York State. <https://nyheritage.org/>.



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Teachers might also consider visiting the Rochester Public Library's Local History & Genealogy Division so students can view its rich collection of primary historical documents and artifacts in person. Find us on the second floor of the Rundel Memorial Building, 115 South Avenue, Rochester, NY. Call 585-428-8370 or email [rochestervoices@libraryweb.org](mailto:rochestervoices@libraryweb.org) to plan a visit soon!

