How a Text Is Organized

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle what each paragraph does.

READ THIS FIRST

Digging the Erie Canal

In the early 1800s, moving goods across New York State was slow and costly. Farmers in the West had to haul crops over bumpy roads by wagon. A trip from Buffalo to New York City could take weeks.

In 1808, a few leaders began to talk about a bold idea. They wanted to dig a canal, a human-made waterway, from Lake Erie to the Hudson River. Many people laughed at the plan. The canal would need to be more than 350 miles long. Some called it “Clinton's Ditch,” after Governor DeWitt Clinton, who supported it.

On July 4, 1817, workers finally broke ground in the town of Rome, New York. Most of the digging was done by hand. Workers used shovels, picks, wheelbarrows, horses and oxen. Thousands of men, including many immigrants from Ireland, joined the crews.

Over the next few years, the canal grew section by section. The middle part was finished first because the land there was flat. Next, workers faced harder ground in the west. Near Lockport, they had to cut through solid rock. There they built a set of locks, like giant water steps, to raise and lower boats.

At last, in October 1825, the whole canal was complete. Governor Clinton rode a boat from Buffalo all the way to New York City. When he arrived, he poured a barrel of Lake Erie water into the Atlantic Ocean. People called it the “Wedding of the Waters.”

After the canal opened, life in New York changed quickly. Mules walking on paths beside the canal pulled flat boats loaded with grain and lumber. Shipping costs dropped by about ninety percent. Towns along the canal, such as Rochester and Syracuse, grew into busy cities.

Today, the Erie Canal is still open. Most boats on it now carry visitors instead of grain and lumber.

1. What does the final paragraph add to the timeline?

   It describes the day the digging began.

   It tells how much the canal cost to build.

   It tells what the canal is like today.

   It explains why the canal was first planned.

2. What does the first paragraph do?

It shows how the canal changed life in towns.

It describes the problem the canal was meant to solve.

It tells what the canal is like today.

It explains how a lock raises boats.

3. What does the third paragraph do?

It tells how the canal was finally finished.

It explains how locks raise and lower boats.

It describes the changes after the canal opened.

It tells how the digging began and who did it.

4. What does the fifth paragraph do?

It lists the towns that grew along the canal.

It tells how the canal was finished and celebrated.

It explains how a lock works near Lockport.

It describes the leaders' first big idea.

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Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

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