How a Text Is Organized

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle the answer to each Why question.

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. The first paragraph describes a problem. Why does the author still use time order for most of the text?

   to list the canal's workers by name

   to describe what the canal looks like to visitors today

   to show how the canal was built step by step over many years

   to compare the canal with a modern highway

2. Why did workers build locks near Lockport?

to raise and lower boats where the land changed height

to store extra water for the dry summer months

to stop boats from reaching the Hudson River

to keep wagons off the canal paths

3. Why was the middle part of the canal finished first?

The ground there was solid rock and hard to dig.

It was the shortest part of the whole canal.

The land there was flat, so digging was easier.

The leaders lived closest to that part of it.

4. Why was the canal sometimes called Clinton's Ditch?

It was named for the farmer who gave the land.

It was named for a town along the canal's route.

It was named for a worker who dug the first mile.

It was named for Governor Clinton, who supported it.

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Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

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