

Erie Canal Debate

This lesson can serve as a formative assessment or an application lesson where students use information that they have learned about the Erie Canal to support their argument in a debate. Teachers will pose a debate question or use debate questions included in this lesson. Students will choose a side and support their argument with evidence using primary source documents. The formative assessment rubric provides criteria for evaluating student performance.

Lesson Duration: 90 minutes

Enduring Understanding: There are differing perspectives on the future of the Erie Canal.

Concepts: perspective, fact vs. opinion, past and future

New York State Social Studies Standards Addressed:

4.1b New York State can be represented using a political map that shows cities, capitals, and boundaries.

4.6c Improved technology, such as the steam engine and the telegraph, made transportation and communication faster and easier. Later developments in transportation and communication technology had an effect on communities, the state, and the world.

4.6d Farming, mining, lumbering, and finance are important economic activities associated with New York State.

4.6f Between 1865 and 1915, rapid industrialization occurred in New York State. Over time, industries and manufacturing continued to grow.

New York State Social Studies Practices Addressed:

A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence

2. Recognize, use, and analyze different forms of evidence used to make meaning in social studies (including sources such as art and photographs, artifacts, oral histories, maps, and graphs).

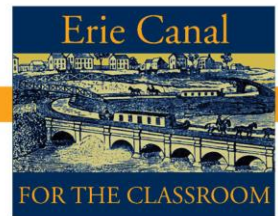
3. Identify and explain creation and/or authorship, purpose, and format for evidence; where appropriate, identify point of view.

4. Identify arguments of others.

6. Create an understanding of the past by using primary and secondary sources.

C. Comparison and Contextualization

2. Identify multiple perspectives on an historical event.



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D. Geographic Reasoning

1. Use location terms and geographic representations (maps and models) to describe where places are in relation to each other, to describe connections between places, and to evaluate the benefits of particular places for purposeful activities.
2. Distinguish human activities and human-made features from “environments” (natural events or physical features—land, air, and water—that are not directly made by humans).
3. Identify how environments affect human activities and how human activities affect physical environments.
5. Describe how human activities alter places and regions.

F. Civic Participation

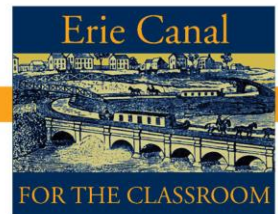
1. Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates, regardless of whether one agrees with the other viewpoints.
2. Participate in activities that focus on a classroom, school, community, state, or national issue or problem.
6. Identify situations in which social actions are required and suggest solutions.
7. Identify people in positions of power and how they can influence people’s rights and freedom.
8. Identify rights and responsibilities as a citizen of your community and state.

Teacher Questions:

1. What is a debate?
2. What are current event topics related to the Erie Canal?
3. What are current perspectives on the use of the Erie Canal?
4. Why is it important to understand differences and other perspectives on issues?
5. What is our responsibility for learning about the Erie Canal in the past, present, and future?

Materials List:

1. List of controversial questions relevant to fourth graders (provided)
2. Poster paper and markers or technology for recording student responses (Google Doc, Padlet, MS Word, etc.)
3. List of possible debate components (provided)
4. Sample debate questions related to the Erie Canal (provided)
5. List of possible roles (provided)



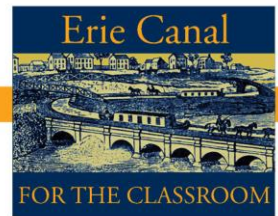
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6. Resources for researching the topic (Internet access, books, articles, etc.)
7. Large notecards for student notes
8. Formative Assessment Rubric (provided)

Procedure:

Teacher Questions	Procedure	Materials
<p>1. What is a debate?</p>	<p>20 minutes: Teacher introduces the idea of a debate to the class. If debating is already a class practice, skip to the next procedure.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pose a controversial question to the class that is related to a familiar topic. Examples (see below for more): Should we ban chocolate milk in school lunches? Should fourth graders be able to bring cell phones to school? 2. Have students share viewpoints, without raising their hand and without the teacher interjecting. 3. After 5 minutes, stop the conversation and have students reflect on their experience by asking: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. “What did you notice about our conversation?” b. “Who spoke? Why?” c. “Did you feel like your voice was heard?” d. “How could we better organize our thoughts?” e. “How could we better organize ourselves?” 4. Record student responses on poster paper or electronically. 5. Explain the components of a debate and their purposes (see below for examples). Test existing knowledge by first asking students to come up with the components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of controversial questions relevant to fourth graders (provided) • Poster paper and markers or technology for recording student responses (Google Doc, Padlet, MS Word, etc.) • List of possible debate components (provided)

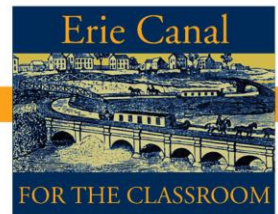




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	and purposes and then fill in any missing understandings.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is a debate? 2. What are current event topics related to the Erie Canal? 3. What are current perspectives on the use of the Erie Canal? 4. Why is it important to understand differences and other perspectives on issues? 	<p>10 minutes: Explain that the class will now participate in a debate about the Erie Canal. Identify a specific debate strategy/format, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Straightforward debate in which each student takes a side, researches the topic, and prepares to argue their position. ○ Inside/Outside Circle strategy to help students prepare their arguments. Students in the inside circle start by talking about the pros/cons of the subject while the students in the outside circle actively listen and respond. The circles rotate and the roles switch. Students can take notes as they organize their thoughts. ○ Role playing debate in which students take on an identity and debate the question from that person's point of view. <p>Pose an Erie Canal-related, debatable question to the class (see below for examples). Explain the parameters of the debate style you have chosen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample debate questions related to the Erie Canal (provided) • List of possible roles (provided)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. What are current event topics related to the Erie Canal? 3. What are current perspectives on the use of the Erie Canal? 	<p>20 minutes: Allow students time to research and take notes on their debate positions.</p> <p>TEACHER NOTE: If you will be using this lesson as a formative assessment, you will collect student notes after the conclusion of the debate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for researching the topic (Internet access, books, articles, etc.) • Large notecards for student notes

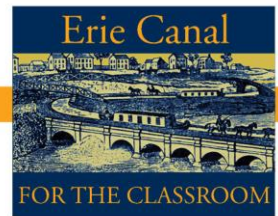




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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is a debate? 2. What are current event topics related to the Erie Canal? 3. What are current perspectives on the use of the Erie Canal? 4. Why is it important to understand differences and other perspectives on issues? 	<p>20 minutes: Students move to a location in the room based on their position in the debate. Allow students 20 minutes to debate the question, using the notes they took.</p> <p>TEACHER NOTE: Try not to involve yourself in the exchange unless there are no more points left to be made and the students have stopped talking. You may want to take notes on points made during the debate that you want to revisit during post-debate reflection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is a debate? 2. What are current event topics related to the Erie Canal? 3. What are current perspectives on the use of the Erie Canal? 	<p>10 minutes: Post-debate reflection: Allow the students time (3 minutes) to reflect on the debate individually, writing their thoughts on the back of their notecards. Then allow students time (7 minutes) to reflect on the debate as a class.</p> <p>Ask the students to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What were the strengths and growth areas for you individually? ○ What were strengths/growth areas for the class as a whole? ○ Which side won the debate? How do you know? ○ What were some of the best arguments that were made? Why were they the best? ○ Is there a point that the other side should have made but didn't? ○ Would you switch sides if you had to hold this debate again? Why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Why is it important to understand differences and 	<p>10 minutes: Content reflection, whole group. Pose the final teacher questions to the class for a final reflection on the</p>	





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<p>other perspectives on issues?</p> <p>5. What is our responsibility for learning about the Erie Canal in the past, present, and future?</p>	<p>purpose of understanding other perspectives regarding Erie Canal issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why is it important to understand differences and other perspectives on issues? ○ What is our responsibility for learning about the Erie Canal in the past, present, and future? 	
	<p>ASSESSMENT: If using this lesson as a formative assessment, use the Formative Assessment Rubric to evaluate each student's knowledge/performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formative Assessment Rubric (provided)

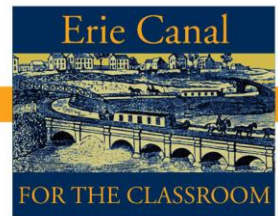
List of controversial questions relevant to fourth graders:

- Should we ban chocolate milk in school lunches?
- Should fourth graders be able to bring cell phones to school?
- Should kids be able to pick their own teachers?
- Should we be able to take out as many library books as we want?
- Should we have year-round school (10 weeks on, 3 weeks off)?
- Should we ban single-use plastics from our lunchroom?

List of possible debate components:

- Supporting arguments
- Opposing arguments
- Repeat arguments until all students have spoken
- Short recess to write rebuttals
- Opposing team's rebuttal
- Supporting team's rebuttal
- Repeat with additional rebuttal for closing argument
- Judges decide on the winner
- Everyone reflects on the process, sharing feedback for their peers and conducting a self-assessment of their own performance





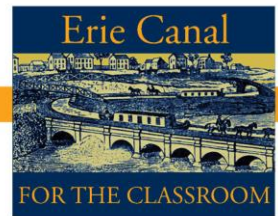
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Sample debate questions related to the Erie Canal:

- Should we create a new transportation system on the Erie Canal for water taxis and ferries?
- Should we fill in the Erie Canal?
- Should they expand the Erie Canalway Trail?
- Should there be a bigger fine for bridge jumping into the canal?
- Should there be more events held on the Erie Canal in the cities, towns, and villages that line the canal?

List of possible roles (these will vary based on the debate question):

- 9-year-old child
- Parent
- Local business owner in a town on the Erie Canal
- New York State resident living in a town on the Erie Canal
- New York State resident NOT living in a town on the Erie Canal
- Transportation company owner
- Conservationist
- Rochester Mayor
- Local university president
- Cyclist
- Doctor
- Town or village government official
- Police officer



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Formative Assessment Rubric

Student name _____ Date _____

Criteria	No 0 points	Mostly 1 point	Yes 2 points
Identifies an argument			
Argument is appropriate/believable for the role			
Uses facts to support the argument			
Evidence of an organized plan for making their point			

Total points: _____ / 8

Teacher Comments: