

United States History Free Response Document Based Question (DBQ)

The Erie Canal

Directions: Construct a coherent essay with an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion to address the following:

Using the documents provided **AND** prior knowledge from in class discussion, explain how the Erie Canal could be viewed as both a blessing and a curse for the young American Nation. Make sure that you cite each document **by letter** in your response. You must use **FOUR** of the nine sources provided.

Things to Consider:

- Pre-write and draft.
- Cite your sources.
 - Example: “Clearly, the chart about shipping freight during the canal era (**Document A**) shows....”
- This is **NOT** a question about the documents. It is an historical question in which you **MUST** incorporate the documents into your answer.
- Make sure you answer **ALL** parts of the question.
- You **MUST** use **OUTSIDE INFORMATION** from class.
- You **MUST** use at least **FOUR** of the sources.
- **FORMAT** and **CONVENTIONS** count (follow the language arts guidelines).

Document A:

**Shipping Freight During
the Erie Canal Era
(New York City to Buffalo)**

	Dirt Road	Canal
Method	Wagon	Boat
Amount of Time	21 Days	8 Days
Cost	\$100/ton	\$10/ton

Source: James Silver, *American History Activities*,
The Center for Applied Research in Education (adapted)

Document B:¹

“This is delightful, brother...The opportunity we so frequently have, of stepping from the canal-boat, and thus walking on the bank, adds to the pleasure derived from the ever changing scenery that is presented to us.”

Source: The character Amelia from the satiric play *A Trip to Niagara* (1828) by William Dunlap

Document C:

“Pleasure! To be dragged along upon a muddy ditch, hour after hour, in constant dread of lifting your head above your knees for fear of having it knock’d off your shoulders by a bridge!”

Source: The character Wentworth (Amelia’s brother) from the satiric play *A Trip to Niagara* (1828) by William Dunlap

Document D:

“The Erie Canal represented the first step in the transportation revolution that would turn...local economies into a nationwide market economy. Within a few years the canal was carrying \$15 million worth of goods annually, twice as much as floated down the Mississippi to New Orleans.”

Source: Daniel Walker Howe in *What Hath God Wrought? The Transformation of America 1815-1848*²

Document E:

“DeWitt Clinton and his fellow Canal sponsors tended to stress how the waterway would provide a market for the bounty of the West, and thus promote the nation’s long-term commercial development. But settlers in the Canal corridor put equal emphasis on how the waterway would allow them to procure highly desired eastern manufactures and luxuries. To them, the market revolution was as much about purchasing comforts as it was about selling raw materials.”

Source: Carol Sheriff in *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862*³

Document F:

“The greatest obstacle in the way of improvement and salvation of this class of men [boatmen] is, *the unjust and wicked conduct of their employers, in DEPRIVING THEM OF THE PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS OF THE SABBATH....*”

Source: American Bethel Society first annual report (1837)⁴

Document G:

“We are 200 miles from the sea but distance you know is reduced to nothing here....”

Source: Mary Ann Archbald to a relative in Scotland, 1838⁵

Document H:

“When it is considered with how much ease families can remove to the land which they own in the west, and with what facility and delight emigrants thither can occasionally revisit their friends and the spot of their nativity, the mind is at once impressed with the magnitude and importance of this great inland communication.”

Source: Connecticut Herald, 1821⁶

Document I:

“...the combination of employers’ disregard for their employees’ well-being and the boat workers intemperate [drinking alcohol] habits contributed to the canallers’ short life expectancy, which did ‘not on average exceed twelve years after they embark{ed} in the watermen’s employment.’”

⁶³.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

Source: Carol Sheriff in *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862*⁷

⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

Name: _____

United States History Free Response Document Based Question (DBQ)

The Erie Canal Rubric

Description:	Comments:	Score:
Contains an introductory paragraph with a thesis that directly addresses <u>ALL</u> parts of the question. Thesis is the last sentence of the introductory paragraph and all information is 100% accurate (<i>3 points</i>).		____/3
At least FOUR of the nine sources are used in the essay <u>AND</u> are cited correctly (<i>8 points</i>).		____/8
Accurate analysis of at least FOUR of the nine sources is <u>COMBINED</u> with classroom knowledge to accurately address all parts of the question. All information is 100% accurate (<i>16 points</i>).		____/16
Contains a conclusion in which the first sentence is a re-statement of the thesis statement (not the exact words) and a summarization of the body paragraphs. All information is 100% accurate.		____/3
The format of the paper is 12 point Times New Roman font and is double-spaced (see language arts guidelines and “fake essay” given to you by Mr. Hudak).		____/3
Spelling, Grammar, and Conventions		____/3

_____/36