Name: Date: Score: / 6

The Erie Canal: Reading Comprehension

Nonfiction: History · about 260 words

Read the passage. Then answer each question. Circle the best answer or write your answer on the lines.

The Erie Canal

In the early 1800s, moving goods across the United States was slow and expensive. The Appalachian Mountains stood between the farms of the Midwest and the cities of the East Coast. Shipping a ton of flour from Buffalo to New York City by wagon could take weeks and cost about $100.

New York Governor DeWitt Clinton had a bold idea: dig a canal, a human-made waterway, connecting Lake Erie to the Hudson River. Many people laughed and called it "Clinton's Ditch." The canal would have to stretch 363 miles through forests, swamps, and hills.

Construction began in 1817. Thousands of workers, many of them Irish immigrants, dug the canal mostly by hand using shovels, picks, and horses. To raise and lower boats over hills, engineers built 83 locks. A lock is a chamber with gates at each end. When a boat enters, the gates close, and water is let in or out to raise or lower the boat to the next level.

The Erie Canal opened in 1825. Mules walking on towpaths beside the canal pulled the boats along. Now the cost of shipping a ton of goods dropped to about $10, and the trip took about a week instead of weeks.

The canal changed the nation. New York City grew into the busiest port in the country. Towns like Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse boomed along the canal's route. Settlers used the canal to move west. Today, the Erie Canal is used mostly by pleasure boats, but it is still a reminder of what bold ideas and hard work can achieve.

1. **Main idea:** What is this passage mostly about?

   A. the life of DeWitt Clinton B. the Appalachian Mountains

   C. how the Erie Canal was built and how it changed the nation D. how mules are trained

2. **Detail:** What did the canal connect?

   A. Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River B. Boston and New York C. Lake Erie and the Hudson River

   D. the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

3. **Detail:** What did people who laughed at the idea call the canal?

   A. the Water Highway B. the Mule Road C. the Great River D. Clinton's Ditch

4. **Vocabulary:** A lock is...

   A. a key for a boat B. a chamber with gates that raises or lowers boats C. a bridge over water

   D. a kind of mule

5. **Detail:** How did the cost of shipping a ton of goods change?

   A. It became free. B. It dropped from about $100 to about $10. C. It stayed the same.

   D. It went up to $1,000.

6. **Inference:** Why did towns like Buffalo and Rochester boom?

ANSWER KEY

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6. **Inference:** Why did towns like Buffalo and Rochester boom?

   They were along the canal's route, so trade and travel passed through them.