

Erie Canal: The Longest Ditch in History

It was the engineering marvel of its time - its construction has been compared to the building of the pyramids of Ancient Egypt. The idea for a canal connecting the Hudson River and the Great Lakes was declared by President Thomas Jefferson to be a "little short of madness". However, DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York, was a huge supporter of the idea. As governor, he pushed through legislation to fund the construction of the canal - Clinton's "Big Ditch" (or as Clinton's opponents would call it, "Clinton's Folly") was born. The massive job was begun in 1817 and completed in 1825.



Directions: We will watch a brief video about the Erie Canal. Use the video clip to answer the questions that follow. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfsgopaDtcg>

1. Why was the Erie Canal built?
2. What role did DeWitt Clinton play in the construction of the canal?
3. Write four interesting facts you learned about the Erie Canal.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

Directions: Listen to the *Erie Canal Song*, as performed by Bruce Springsteen. What is the mood of this song? Why do you think it was written? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Koj5yGigFNU>

I got a mule and her name is Sal.
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal.
She's a good old worker and a good old pal.
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal.

We hauled some barges in our day,
Filled with lumber, coal, and hay.
We know every inch of the way,
From Albany to Buffalo.

[Chorus:]

*Low bridge, everybody down.
Low bridge, yeah, we're comin' to a town.
And you'll always know your neighbor.
And you'll always know your pal.
If ya ever navigated on the Erie Canal.*

Better look around for a job, old gal.
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal.
You can bet your life I'll never part with Sal.
((Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal.))

Get up mule, here comes a lock,
We'll make Rome 'bout six o'clock.
One more trip and back we'll go,
Right back home to Buffalo.

[Chorus:]

Where would I be if I lost my pal?
Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal.
I'd like to see a mule good as my Sal,
((Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal.))

A friend of mine once got her sore,
Now he's got a broken jaw.
'Cause she let fly with an iron toe,
And kicked him back to Buffalo.

[Chorus:]

((Low bridge, everybody down.))
((Low bridge, we're comin' to a town.))

[Humming to end.]

What is the mood of this song?

Why do you think this song was written?