New Ways to Travel

As New York grew, people began looking for ways to improve life in the state. They used new technologies to find ways to travel and to ship goods. Technology is the use of new ideas or knowledge to do things. Many new inventions changed the everyday life in New York and across the United States.

Location of the Erie Canal

The Hudson River flows from its source in the Adirondack Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean just east of New York City. It has been a major transportation link for the New York area since it was first explored by Henry Hudson in 1609.

In 1825 the Hudson River and Erie Canal combined to connect New York City with Buffalo and Lake Erie. Because of this connection, trade increased and New York City grew. Cities along or near the pathway of the Erie Canal also grew in importance. A few are major communities today including Buffalo, Rome, Syracuse, Utica, and Troy.

Troy is a city located on the Hudson River just north of Albany. This is where the Mohawk River joins the Hudson River. The Mohawk River was used as part of the waterway forming the Erie Canal. It was in Rome, New York, a village on the Mohawk, that the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal took place on July 4, 1817. These waterways also served as a “gateway to the West” for people from the New England states. Settlers from these states would come to Albany and begin the trip to the various parts of the United States.

The Task:
Following the directions below, correctly fill in your map of New York State.

Outline New York State in GREEN. Don’t forget Long Island.

Color all the waterways BLUE. Include the ocean, rivers and lakes.

Circle the capital of New York in ORANGE.

Show the course of the Erie Canal from Rome to Buffalo in RED.

Use a BLACK DOT to locate the five towns along the Erie Canal and write the correct name next to the dot. The towns are Buffalo, Troy, Syracuse, Rome and Utica.
Steam Locomotives

In the early 1800’s three new forms of transportation - the steamboat, packet boats, and the railroad - helped to increase trade in New York. This new technology also lowered the cost of transportation and convinced many people to move westward in New York State.

Early steam engines were also used to power locomotives. A locomotive is a train engine used to move railroad cars. The first railroad in New York was called the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad. Its 16-mile track connected Albany with Schenectady.

New York’s first steam-powered locomotive was called the Dewitt Clinton. On August 9, 1831, thousands of people gathered for the railroad’s opening. The success of the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad led to a boom in the building of railroads. By 1842, a person could travel all the way from Albany to Buffalo by train. To do this, a person would have to use six different railroads.

* Why do you think the first steam locomotive was named the Dewitt Clinton?

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In 1853, Erastus Corning combined the rail lines into one company. It was called the New York Central Railroad. By the mid-1850’s rail lines stretched along the Hudson River to Albany. New York State had 1,649 miles of track with another 1,000 miles of track being built.

Go back to your map of New York State.

Complete the following in BROWN on your map:

* Draw in the first railroad connecting Albany with Schenectady.

* Draw the steam locomotives’ route from Albany to Buffalo.

* Draw and label the New York Central Railroad along the Hudson River to Albany. (Remember . . . railroads DO NOT travel on waterways.)
Look at your map of New York State again.
Turn and talk with your partner / neighbor and then answer the question below.

* By the mid 1850’s how did railroad technology affect the geography of New York?