



## Introduction

This lesson gives children the opportunity to investigate some of the differences between canals & rivers. They will learn what the words 'natural' and 'man made' mean, how rivers are created as surface water runs to the sea, and why canals were built. They will learn to identify some of the major features of both by name.

## Learning objectives.

- To understand the meaning of the words river & canal.
- To understand that rivers have natural origins although they may subsequently be altered by human action.
- To understand that canals are man-made
- To understand some of the main reasons why canals are built
- To learn the names of some of the main features of a river & canal.

## National curriculum links

**KS2 Geography :Geographical Enquiry & Skills 2)** In developing geographical skills, pupils should be taught: (a) to use appropriate geographical vocabulary **Knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes 4** (a)Pupils should be taught to: recognise and explain patterns made by individual physical and human features in the environment (b) recognise some physical and human processes and explain how these can cause changes in places and environments 6) During the key stage, pupils should be taught the **Knowledge, skills and understanding** through ..... three themes:...(c)water and its effects on landscapes and people, including the physical features of rivers....or coasts,... and the processes of erosion and deposition that affect them.

## Differentiation

- All children will learn that a river is natural and a canal man made.
- Most children will be able to identify & name the main features of a river & a canal.
- Some children will understand when and why canals were built.

## Resources

- 1.Copies of Rivers & Canals comparison sheet for each child.
- 2.Pencils
- 3.Two large flat trays, filled with wet sand, and plastic jugs/bottles filled with water
- 4.Toy boats, small enough to travel down the sand tray 'canal' when it has been built.(Optional)
- 5.Some toy people to operate the boats e.g. Lego or Playmobil figures. (Optional)



## Key vocabulary

- river
- canal
- natural
- man made
- source
- mouth
- curved
- straight
- lock

## Lesson Plan

- 1) Before the lesson begins, ask children what they know about rivers and canals, and record any information that they give on a board both differences and similarities.
- 2) Explain that rivers occur naturally, as a result of rain falling on high ground, and running downwards across lower ground to the sea. They may be thousands of miles long, or only a few miles. Canals are man made, and designed to allow boats and people to travel by boat from one place to another. Sometimes they link river systems or lakes.
- 3) Split class into two groups. Arrange the two trays of sand, so that all the children in the group can stand around them. (In good weather, it would be sensible to do this part of the lesson outside). Ensure that the sand is wet, and well compacted in the trays before the lesson starts. It might be necessary to tilt one of the trays (the river tray) a little at one side, so that water poured in at one side will flow slowly down to the bottom.
- 4) Tell the two groups that one is going to make a river, and the other, a canal. Choose one person from the river group to take a jug of water, and begin SLOWLY to pour it onto the sand at the uphill side of the tray. Tell the others to watch carefully how the water flows across the sand, and think of good words to describe what it is doing.
- 5) Ask the canal group, to dig a straight trench across their tray of sand, down to the tray at the bottom. This could be done with their hands, plastic spoons, or small beach spades. Get them to ensure that the sides of the canal are as vertical as possible. If you wish, the 'canal' could be lined with a waterproof liner, such as Lego bricks, aluminium foil or cling film. When the trench is complete, SLOWLY pour water into the trench, until it is full. To reinforce the idea that canals are always built to answer a transport need, you could get them to put a small group of toy figures at one end, and another at the other end of the 'canal', and then send a small boat along the canal between the two.
- 6) Bring the two groups back together to describe what they saw.



## Rivers & Canals

How many differences can you find between a river and a canal?  
Write or draw what you have found out!

A river is.....

A canal is....