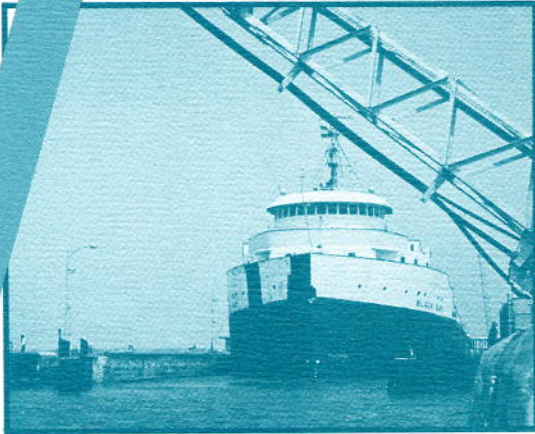


F

rom Ocean to Prairie

A classroom adaptation of a longer documentary, this film is the story of a very special shipping lane, the St. Lawrence Seaway. By the time ships traverse its intricate series of canals and reach Thunder Bay on Lake Superior, they have climbed 183 metres above sea level and travelled 3700 kilometers into Canada's heartland.



Built in the 1950s, the St. Lawrence Seaway was not the first effort to "bring the ocean to the prairies." As early as 1780, a primitive canal was attempted to help move goods and grain in and out of Canada's heartland. A series of dramatic stills bring to life the Seaway's long and colorful history, and elucidate the geography that gave rise to this dream of a waterway to the prairies. The film then focusses on the Seaway's operation, taking viewers on a fascinating tour of the series of locks that start at St. Lambert near Montreal and end in Sault-Ste-Marie.

Animated diagrams clearly depict how the locks work, and speeded-up action illuminates the twin-lock system. Probably the most impressive lock series is that of the Welland Canal, engineered to counteract the power and majesty of Niagara Falls. So steep are some of the locks here that they resemble a flight of stairs; locks 4, 5 and 6 of this series are in fact called "flight locks." The spectacular lock at Welland Bypass actually carries massive ships over railway lines and highways. Several winter scenes, during which the locks are emptied, inspected and repaired, give viewers a clearer idea of the incredible size of each lock.

This skillfully crafted documentary will bring students closer to important segments of Canadian history and geography. (This is a shortened version of **Seaway to the Heartland**.)

FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, GEOGRAPHY

Grades 4 to 6

Some questions for discussion:

1. The narrator in the film talks about dreams forged by geography. What facets of the Canadian terrain made it so difficult to move goods in and out of the heartland? What areas of Canada does the term *heartland* refer to?
2. Describe how the Seaway's lock system works. What is meant by the "twin-lock" system?
3. What happens to the locks in the winter?
4. What are some of the major cities on the Great Lakes that can now be reached by ocean-going ships?
5. What has been the St. Lawrence Seaway's impact on Canadian life (lifestyles and economy)? How might your life be different today had the Seaway never been built?

Activities:

1. On an enlarged map of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes area, mark the series of locks that comprise the St. Lawrence Seaway. Choose one of these lock series and add descriptive detail on how each lock works and how many metres it raises or drops a ship.
2. Write a short essay on the impact the Seaway has had on Canadian life in general and on your life in particular.
3. Research one of the cities that are now ports of call for ships. Find out how many ships a year visit this port; what goods they bring in; and what goods they take on.

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