

# Aliens Visit the Canal Storytelling Resource

This downloadable self-directed resource has been developed for teachers and home-schoolers to support The Day ALIENS came to the TAME VALLEY CANAL through Literacy and Geography.

There are four activities that can be used on their own or as part of the Storytelling Learning Bundle. All activities are linked to other Explorers resources where relevant.

See the Example Unit for Work.



## Activity 1: Watch the Film

**Watch** The Day Aliens came to the Tame Valley Canal

This short film has been developed for teachers and home-schoolers to see the book in an animated form, narrated by local girl, Elessamé.

Once pupils have watched the film they can explore ways of telling the story themselves, using the handling items.



## Activity 2: Download the Book

**Download** the book and print off the handling items descriptions (page 2) and images (page 3). Collect and make each of the items listed. Children can make and use the handling items to recognise, name and think about what they are used for in real life and use them to talk about aspects of the story and why they made changes in the local area.

## Activity 2 Continued

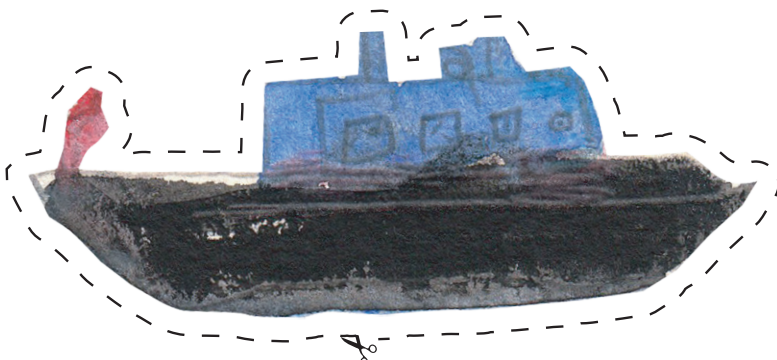
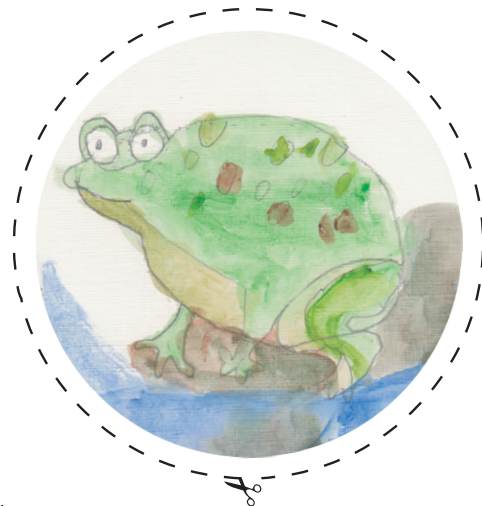
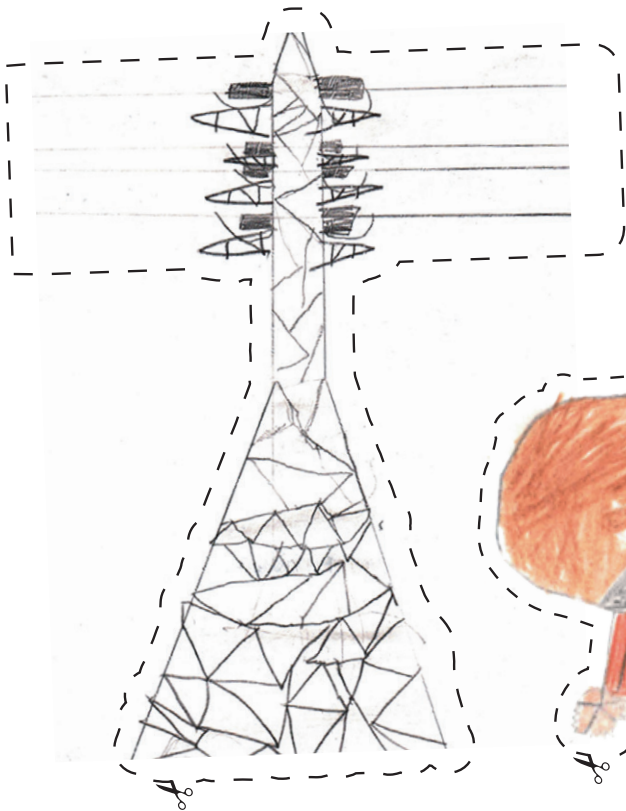
### Handling Items

This following list of handling items, has been selected to help children explore and discuss ideas about their local canal. Teachers can source local items, children can make items to symbolise the geographical features of a canal, or print off the images supplied.

Handling Object and Storybook Page	Description
<b>Aliens and children</b> (print drawing of alien)	Children can cut out or make their own alien, or a drawing of themselves, to help them to interpret the story from different perspectives.
<b>Electricity pylon</b> Page 8, 11, 23, 24, 30	Electricity pylons followed the line of the canal and modern pylons are still a distinctive feature along the canal today, carrying electricity to industry and people's homes.
<b>Boat</b> Page 10, 11, 12, 13, 18	Tug boats were a common site in the working days of the canal, pulling 'trains' of narrowboats, loaded with coal, or moving boats about – they were short, and could turn in the width of the canal.
<b>Aqueduct</b> (make a simple trough out of a paper or plastic box) Page 15, 30	Boats can cross over rivers, roads and even railways, by using a bridge designed to carry water, called an aqueduct.
<b>Frog fish or plant</b> Page 16, 25	Canals are a corridor for nature, passing right through the towns. Plants and animals live in the water and alongside the canals.
<b>Horse</b> Page 19	Boats full of coal, towed by horses, were once a common sight. They might be taking coal to the General Electricity Company power station, to be burnt to generate electricity.
<b>Bridge</b> (make a simple bridge out of a piece of cardboard) Page 23, 30	Whether a canal was built to follow the contours of the land, or to run directly to the nearest town, there was a need to put in bridges. Landowners, businesses and their workers needed to cross the new waterway, and as time passed, more and more bridges were constructed.
<b>Pipe</b> (A drinking straw) Page 30	Gas pipes carry gas to local factories and houses under the towpath. Occasionally they can be seen above ground, perhaps where there was a bridge, or crossing the canal alongside a bridge.
<b>Canalside building</b> (make a simple building out of cardboard) Page 12, 23, 30	Local companies built their warehouses (for storing goods), factories and power stations alongside the canal where they could easily load and unload.
<b>Coal</b> (a piece of coal)	Coal was the main reason why canals began to be built during the Industrial Revolution.

# Cut Out and Play

If aliens visited a canal near you what interesting things do you think they might notice?



## Activity 3: Canal Journey Stick

### Keep the energy levels up with this fun activity walk

Telling people stories is an age-old way of explaining the world. Making a **Journey Stick** is a great way to help you to remember what you saw on a journey along your local waterway. The Aboriginal people of Australia used Journey Sticks. They collected objects on their way and attached them to a stick. When they got home, they used the stick to help them remember and tell friends and family the story of their journey.



You will need some string, ribbon or rubber bands, tape, and scissors. The stick can be any size, big or small, whatever takes your fancy! Children collect and tie things to their stick as they walk, in chronological order – so they can re-trace their journey when telling the story of their canal adventure later.



Children collect things that will help them to remember their journey, using all their senses to help to describe this place – what can you see, hear, smell or touch? Look out for special things, notice detail. Look for patterns and different colours, look into the distance or look into trees overhead. What tiny sounds can be heard at ground level and what distant sounds can be heard? Pupils could try to pick some objects that remind them of natural things and others that remind them about the canal has been built, what buildings are there and people they met.

**Alternative Written Journey Stick:** Cut a long piece of card for each child or pair. Take pens or pencils on your walk. Pupils can work independently or in pairs, to write down descriptive, sensory and alliterative words and make marks and drawings to help them to remember what they saw on their journey. The notes can be used to write an account of the journey later, from the perspective of an explorer.



- **Remind children to be mindful about what they fix to the stick** – only collect things that have fallen to the ground, rather than picking flowers, digging up things or attaching rubbish. Never reach across the water to collect something. If they're not sure whether something is safe to collect, remind them to always check with a grown up.

When pupils get back, they can take it in turns to use the stick to tell everyone a story about their journey. Pupils could use the stick to help them remember what they saw and plan to write an explorer's account of their journey!

## Activity 4: Then and Now

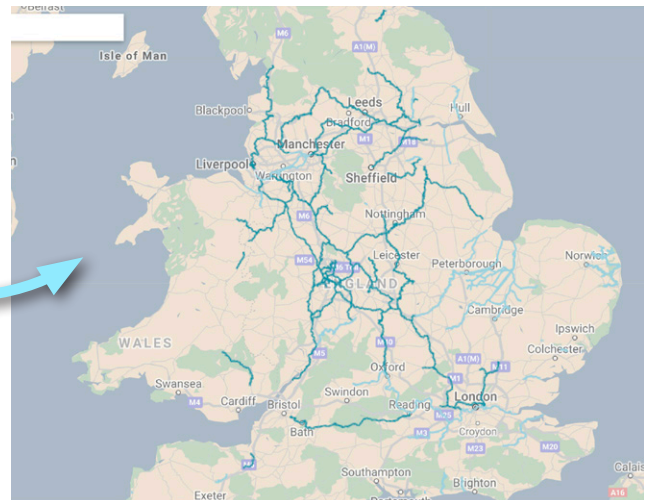
If aliens landed on the earth, they might find maps and photographs a very useful tool for finding their way around!

We can learn a lot about our local area by looking at maps and photographs. First, investigate the Canal River Trust's online digital map to look at the canal system in your local area. Pupils can work in small groups to consider the differences between the maps and photographs to look at how things have changed over time.

[The Canal & River Trust's digital online map](#) is free to use. Pupils can zoom in to different levels of the map:

Here is the map showing canals across England and Wales...

This is a digital map, created on a computer, so there are lots of different layers, and the more we zoom in, the more detail we can see.



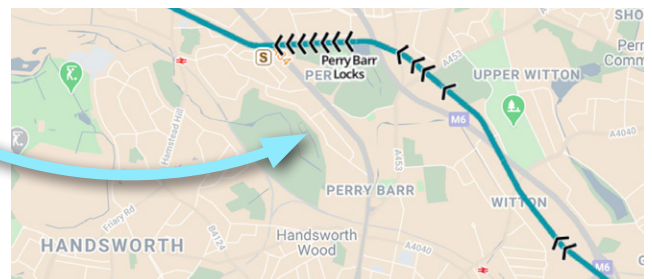
Pupils can **zoom** in to look at the canals that still exist in Birmingham and the Black Country today.

Pupils can **compare** this map with an old one to see what differences there are.



### Symbols:

Maps have special symbols as a quick way of showing you features on a map. On the Canal & River Trust digital map, locks are shown as black arrows. They show which way is uphill, because the arrow points which way is up.



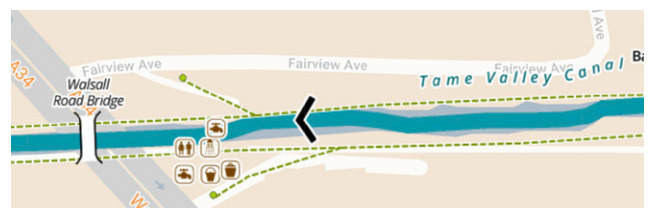
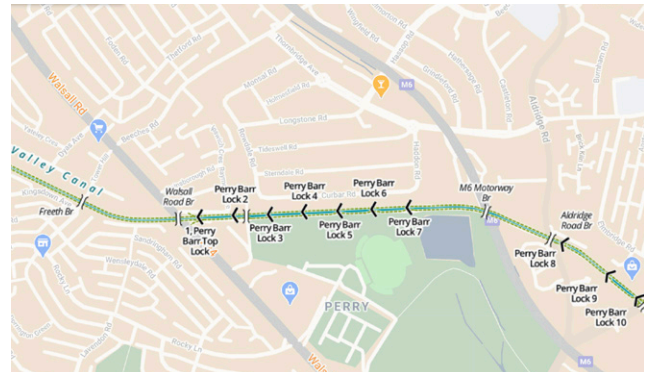
## Activity 4 Continued

Pupils could try zooming into a section of the map to look at a detail near to where you live.

### Pupils see if they can find these features:

- The canal
- Locks
- Bridges
- A park
- Main roads, small roads and a motorway
- A river
- A scale – this map is measured in metres and kilometres
- Your school

You can even zoom in to see where there are paths on the map, the names of local roads, and what services there are for boats on the canal here. The map descriptions can be expanded by clicking on 'legend'.



### Extension Activity: Comparison with old maps

During the Industrial Revolution, (250 years ago), the canals were built mainly to deliver coal to the towns and cities. Roads at that time were privately owned and were not in good condition. There were no railways and canals were built so that cargoes could be delivered to industrial towns around the country.

Pupils can look at maps of their own area and compare and contrast them with the features on the modern GIS map. Look for canals that have been filled in; locks; towns and cities; lakes and reservoirs.



This map, from the Waterways Archive, shows canals around Birmingham and the Black Country around 100 years ago (1924). The canals are shown as a lot of dark lines across the map and some of the main towns are shown. Old maps like this were drawn by hand.

Map reference: <https://collections.canalrivertrust.org.uk/bw197.1.1.29>

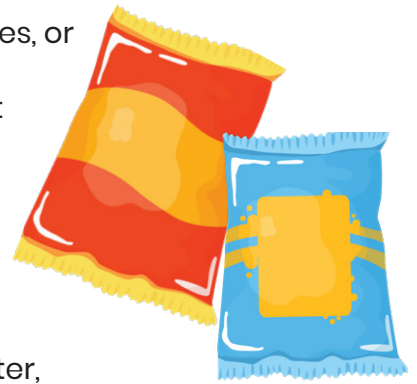
BW197/1/1/29 "Map of the BCN" Date:1924

Reference code: BW197/1/1/29

Download and look at our **Then and Now Canal Picture Show** (PowerPoint) to see what has changed on and around your local canals.

## Activity 5: Lunchbox Litter Make and Write Task .....

- Pupils bring in 5 items of 'clean litter'. These can be from lunchboxes, or selected from home recycling.
- Use the litter to make and paint an alien or a creature that lives at the canal.



### Watch [Protest Poster Film](#)

- Consider and write down words that describe the problems of dumped litter, why it makes us sad, and what the alien or a wild animal thinks about this.
- Pupils develop a piece of persuasive writing – either a Protest Poster, protesting about all the litter that people dump, or use empathy skills to write a letter from the alien or a wild animal, arguing why they think that people shouldn't dump rubbish.

### Canal geographical vocabulary

Canal, lock, bridge, aqueduct, valley, banks, towing path, canal basin, wharf, dock, warehouse

### Litter and plastics vocabulary

Rubbish, dumped, underwater, hidden, sharp, unsightly, pollution, sad, angry, plastic, cans, packaging, waste, bottles, bags, wrapping