

Let's Go Outdoors!



Canal story & boat creation



This activity invites you on a journey through time to discover the fascinating story of our canals and then get creative by either drawing your very own boat design or building a miniature vessel.

What to take with you:

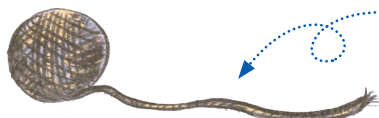


Paper or
a notebook

Pencils or
crayons



A short piece of
string per person
(around 20cm)



Find a safe and comfortable spot by the canal (remember to stay at least two steps back from the water's edge) where you can relax as a family to enjoy the first part of this activity.

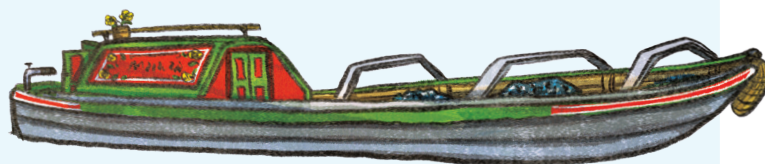
Part 1: The canal's story

You can take turns [reading this story](#) aloud or listen together.

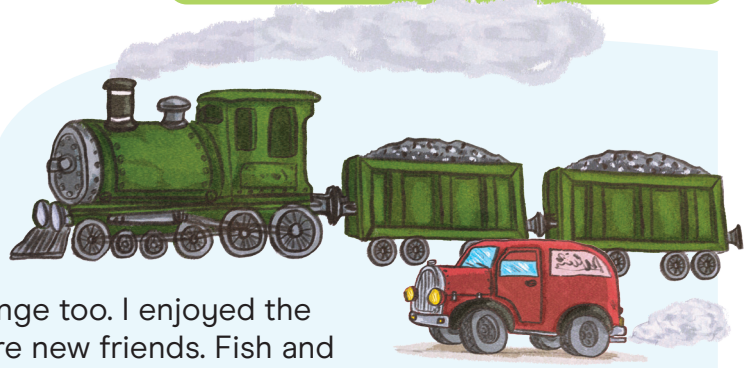


"Come with me on a little journey through time. My life started more than 250 years ago. I remember the day I became a shiny new waterway, a canal creating a pathway where the rivers didn't flow. The boats came in their hundreds! My water was so busy carrying coal, wood, and metal, sending out plumes of smoke and noise. It was loud!

Back then, I worked hard, and together with those who travelled on my waters, we helped shape a nation. We created jobs and built towns and cities. My waters stretched into the distance as far as the eye could see. After many years, things suddenly changed. The boats became fewer and fewer, and my locks stayed closed and began to crumble.



But then, I started to see an intriguing change. Great steam trains and then petrol cars crossed my bridges, carrying the loads I once did.



Gradually, as things changed, I began to change too. I enjoyed the quiet time and started making more and more new friends. Fish and birds visited more often, and butterflies, dragonflies, bumblebees, and water voles came to stay. Letting go of the old ways, life now flourished around me. Flowers blossomed, and the sunshine shone through the trees, creating beautiful, dappled light on the water. Where once had been darkness, dirt, smoke, and noise, now there is peace, quiet, and tranquillity.



Then, people returned to me too! My locks were cleaned and opened, and I was cared for. Now, life flows through me once more. I treasure our time together, learning and exploring in this haven where we enjoy the slow, steady pace of life together. Thank you for visiting me, even in your imagination, and for being such an important part of this wonderful place. Know that I am here for you whenever you wish to return."

Think about the story together (while enjoying your spot by the canal):

- What did you **imagine** when you heard about the busy canal long ago? Can you see any signs of that **history** around you?
- How did the canal change over time in the story? Can you see any wildlife near the canal today?
- Why do you think it's important to **care** for the canal? What can we do to help?
- What did you notice about your thoughts while listening to the story? Did your mind clear? This is being in the now, the present moment.



Part 2: Your boat creation

Now that you've heard the story of the canal and the boats that used to travel on it, it's time to become a boat designer or builder.

You can do this at the canal-side or when you get home:

Option 1: Design your dream boat

- **Get inspired by the canal:** Think about the shapes and sizes of boats you might have seen on the canal or in pictures. Consider what kind of cargo they might have carried or who might have travelled on them.
- **Draw your boat:** Use your paper and pencils or crayons to draw your very own canal boat design. You can make it as simple or as detailed as you like.
- **Add details:** Think about adding features like a cabin, a chimney, or even passengers. What colours would your boat be?
- **Name your boat:** Give your boat a special name.



Option 1: Build a miniature boat

1. **Gather natural materials** (Look around the canal side or other green space):
 - Small sticks (fairly straight ones work well)
 - Leaves (larger, flatter ones work well for rafts)
 - Small pieces of bark
 - Your piece of string
 - Small pebbles, shells, or even little toy figures to be your boat's passengers.
2. **Design your boat:** Think about what kind of boat you want to make. Will it be a simple raft, or will it have sides like a barge?
3. **Build your creation:** Use the sticks as the main structure. You can use leaves or bark to create a flat surface for a raft or as sides for a boat.
4. **Tie it together:** Use your string or natural materials to tie the different pieces of your boat together.
5. **Add a passenger (optional):** Choose a small pebble, shell, or toy to be a passenger on your boat.



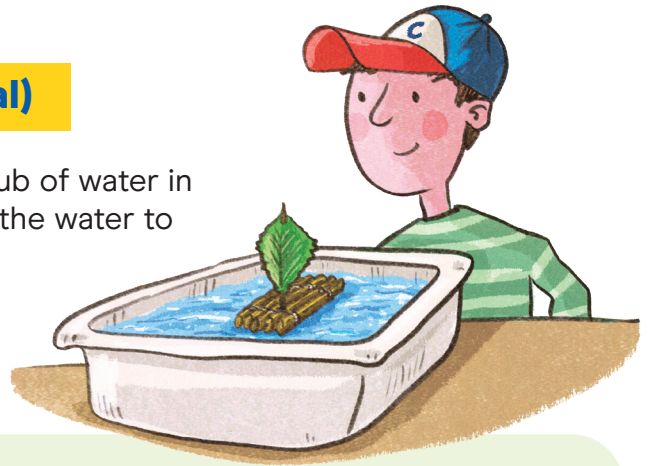
Taking Your Creations Home
Keep your wonderful boat drawing or your miniature boat as a reminder of the canal's story and your creativity.

The flotation challenge

(Important: not in the canal)

If you choose to build a boat, find a large bowl or tub of water in your home or garden. Carefully place your boat in the water to see if it floats:

- Does it float well?
- Does it tip over?
- Can it carry your passenger?



Experiment and improve (for builders)

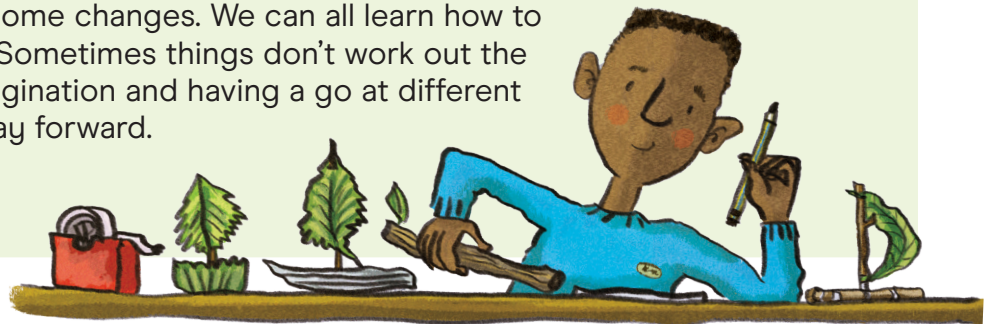
If your boat doesn't float perfectly the first time, it's okay. That's part of the fun. Think about why it might not be working and have a go at making some changes to your design. This is all about being creative and solving problems.

Think about It

- **For those sketching:** What kind of work do you imagine your boat doing on the canal? What would it be carrying?
- **For those building:** What materials worked best for making your boat float? Why do you think that is? What challenges did you face while building your boat? How did you solve them?
- **The boats on the canal long ago** were used to carry heavy loads. Is the boat you have drawn or built similar or different?

The story of adapting

Just like the canal has changed over time, you might have designed or built your boat in a certain way and then made some changes. We can all learn how to adapt to new situations in life. Sometimes things don't work out the first time, but by using our imagination and having a go at different approaches, we often find a way forward.



Embark on a creative canal adventure with your family!

Hey families! Ready to dive into the past and get creative?

Share Your Creations! Tag us with #CanalRiverTrust and #LivesBetterByWater



Explorers

Explore more fun activities at canalrivertrust/explorers.co.uk
Let's make memories and celebrate the beauty of our canals together!

