



THE PANAMA CANAL

1 History is filled with lots of great building projects. In the ancient world we find China's Great Wall and the pyramids of Africa, South America and Asia. In modern times there is the Brooklyn Bridge and the Panama Canal. These are all great works of engineering. They have

stood the test of time. You can still visit them today.

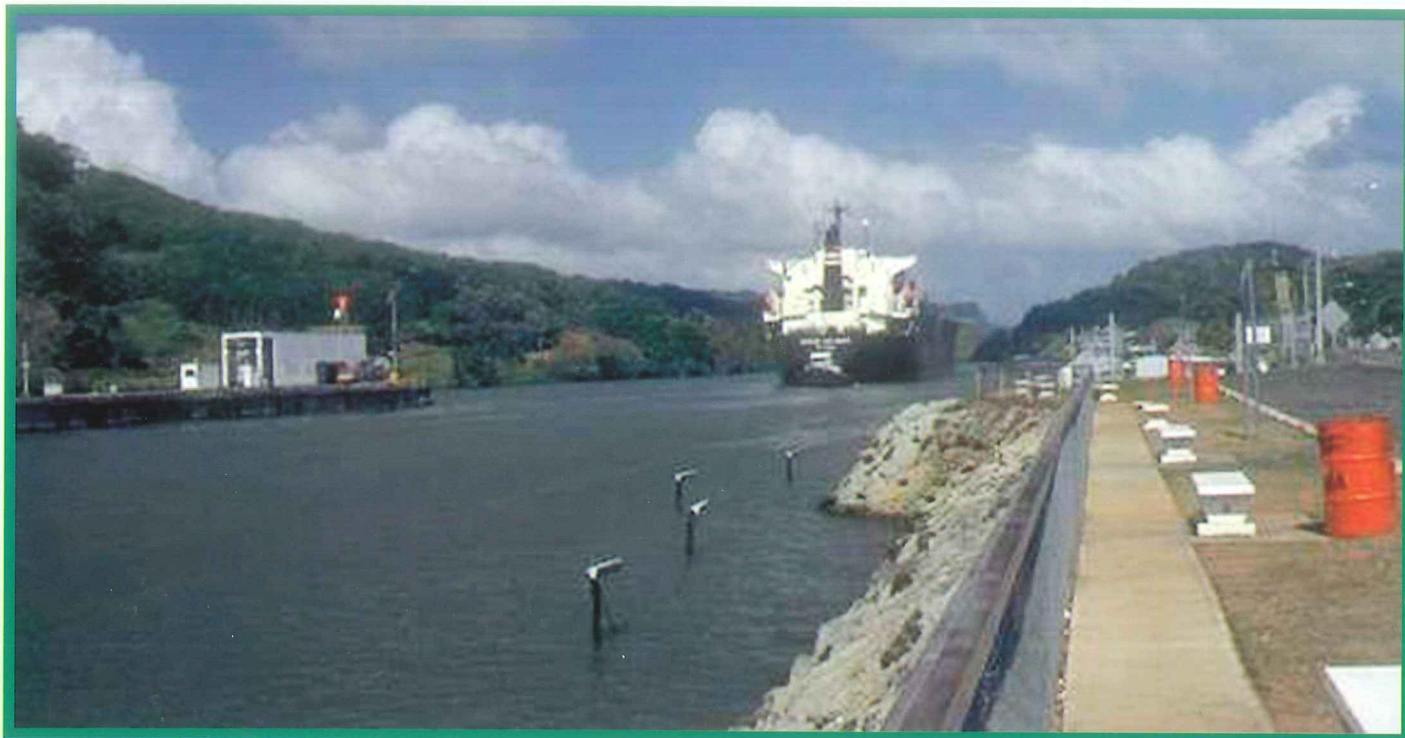
2 The Panama Canal was a very expensive project. There was not just a lot of money spent on the Canal. A lot of people lost their lives building it.

Was it worth the price?

- 3 Shipping companies would say that it was. The Panama Canal cuts the trip between the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean by more than 12,000 kilometres. Shorter trips mean less money is spent on ship fuel and crews. The opening of the Canal also brought a lot of business with it. Panama, a poorer country, now receives money from the ships using its canal.
- 4 On the other hand, the Canal was the biggest project for the United States of America at that time. The USA spent US\$352 million on it. France had also tried to build a canal before the Americans. It was a big failure. This means that, in total, US\$639 million was spent. The project placed a huge drain on both countries' bank accounts.
- 5 People are very happy to travel by ship through the Canal. The Canal is made up of a system of cross-country water locks. These make the trip a very safe and pleasant one. In the past ships would have to travel by open seas. This would take them into the dangerous waters of Cape Horn. A lot of small ships could not survive such a trip.
- 6 Many lives have been saved by the Canal. But many lives were spent when it was being built. During the construction attempt by the French 22,000 people died. The Americans lost about 5,600

workers. Landslides were very common killers. So were diseases, such as yellow fever and malaria. Was this large loss of life worth it?

- 7 Time is also saved by the Panama Canal. The Canal is a very helpful short cut. Cargo ships and passenger ships can now travel much faster than before. This is great news for companies that want to send their goods overseas. Less time travelling means more money is saved on deliveries. It also stops their customers from waiting too long. The Panama Canal can cut about a week off most trips between the Pacific and Atlantic.
- 8 But do these fast trips make up for the cost of building the Panama Canal? Together the Americans and French spent 34 years on the project. A lot of weeks will need to be saved to make up for that many years.
- 9 Today the Panama Canal is one of the world's most important waterways. We cannot turn back the clock and bring back everything that was spent in its construction. But, we can continue to use the Canal in the years to come. One day more people will have benefited from the Panama Canal than those who lost their lives on it. In this way, we can say that the Canal was worth the cost.



Questions

- 1 What type of building is not mentioned in the first section?
 - a bridge
 - b wall
 - c tower
- 2 Shorter trips mean
 - a less money spent.
 - b more fuel used.
 - c less business.
- 3 Why is the Panama Canal safer than the old way?
 - a It goes past Cape Horn.
 - b It doesn't go through the open sea.
 - c It doesn't have landslides.
- 4 Malaria is
 - a an ocean.
 - b a disease.
 - c a country.
- 5 Who spent the most money on the Panama Canal?
 - a America
 - b France
 - c Panama
- 6 What does the last paragraph mean?
 - a The Panama Canal will always be worth more than what was spent on it.
 - b The Panama Canal harmed too many people, so it will never regain what was lost.
 - c The Panama Canal will continue to be used, so will help more people than it harmed.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 A channel of water (1)
- 8 A planned design or assignment (2)
- 9 To try to do something (6)
- 10 A person travelling by transportation (7)
- 11 Gained or profited (9)

Grammar

Find a **noun** (person, place or thing) in these sentences.

- 12 The workers tried very hard.
- 13 Previously, no small ships had survived.
- 14 Building the canal was very costly.
- 15 It is impossible to turn back the clock.

Back To The Text...

- 16 The Panama Canal extracted a huge death toll.
 - a true
 - b false
- 17 In which part of the library would you find this text?
 - a fiction
 - b non-fiction
- 18 Another good name for this text would be:
 - a Crossing Oceans
 - b The Biggest Short-Cut

Cloze

The Deadly Bridge

Choose **five** of the following words to complete this cloze passage.

bridge water twelve years
cables opened steel people

When it ¹⁹ in 1824, the Brooklyn Bridge was the longest suspension ²⁰ in the world. It was an amazing and challenging creation. During the thirteen ²¹ of construction it robbed the builder of his life and took his son's health. Twenty-seven ²² died as they struggled to bring the dream to fruition. The bridge, in a final morbid afterthought, took ²³ more people in a stampede during the opening week.

Challenge Option

Design: Design a flying cargo ship.

