

1. There are over 2,200 miles (3,500km) of navigable canals and rivers in the UK. It is less than 6 miles along the road from your school to Wolverhampton, so you can imagine for yourself how many canals amount to 2,200 miles. Most canals have a 4mph speed limit (the speed of a brisk walk), but it is not always possible to achieve even this.

*Question:* why is the speed limit low, and why might boats sometimes fail to even reach it?

2. The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal near to your school is almost 250 years old. It was opened in 1772 and is 46 miles long with 43 locks. It was built by James Brindley. One of its most famous features is Bratch Locks, a short walk from your school.

*Question:* Name three other famous canal engineers, and what they were famous for.

3. In the days before railways and cars, boats carried all sorts of cargoes.

*Question:* Can you remember at least three of the things they used to carry?

4. Life was very hard living on a boat. There was no television, iPads, computers, games, hot water, electricity, flushing toilets or any of what we now take for granted.

*Question:* What would you miss most if you couldn't have it in a boat?

5. Children younger than you are now would be expected to start work very early in the morning until late at night, in all weathers.

6. Modern boats have all the things you would expect at home. It's just that they are all in a long floating metal tube with a low ceiling!

7. Lots of boat-children never went to school and could not read or write.

8. Not so very long ago many of our canals were abandoned and filled in because they were no longer wanted.

9. Lots of different plants and animals live in and along our waterways. Our canals are very important to the health of our environment and where we live and play an essential part in our ecosystem.

10. Today, thanks to the efforts of lots of people who love them, the canals are busier than ever. Many people live on the water and there are new opportunities for carrying freight. There are also new opportunities for the use of our old waterways.

*Question:* Other than boating, what modern uses can you think of for the canal and its towpath?