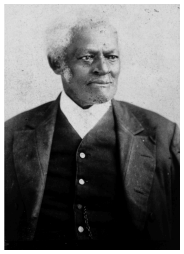
Common Reading: Credible Hulk



After the Civil War, a Rochester man named Rev. Thomas James published a book about his life. In the book he describes being enslaved in New York and his decision to escape and seek his freedom on the Erie Canal.

Adapted from *LIFE OF REV. THOMAS JAMES BY HIMSELF 1886*

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My mother refused to go. She ran into the attic to hide. But she was chased, caught, and tied up by her hands and feet. Then, she was given to her new owner. I saw my mother for the last time as they rode away with her.

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I stayed with Master Hess from March until June of that year. Then, I ran away. My master had worked me hard. Finally, he tried to hurt me. This made me decide to escape from slavery.

I got up in the night. I used the new path of the Erie Canal as my guide and traveled west. About a week later, I reached the village of Lockport. No one stopped me while I was running away. Men were working on digging the new canal in many places, but they never bothered to ask me any questions. I slept in barns at night and begged for food at farmhouses along the way.

At Lockport, a Black man showed me the way to the Canadian border. I crossed the Niagara River at Youngstown on a ferry boat. I was free!

Once I was on free land, I started looking for work. I found a job at a place called Deep Cut on the Welland Canal, which they were digging at the time. I found the workers to be a rough group, and I soon decided to leave them.

In the spring, I made my way to Rochester and found a home with Lawyer Talbert. I did the chores around his place. I did the same work for Orlando Hastings. I was nineteen years old then.

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Credible Hulk



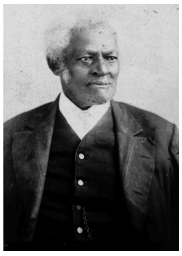
Your task is to determine whether the document/artifact is reliable (can you trust this?). In order to do this task, answer the following:

✎ **How did Thomas James use the Canal to seek his freedom?**

✎ **Who helped Thomas James escape to Canada?**

✎ **Is the document/artifact credible (reliable/believable)? Why or why not?**

Common Reading: Mister E



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Mister E



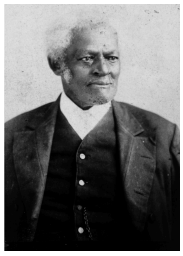
Your task is to solve the mystery of the purpose of this document/artifact. In order to do this task, examine the document/artifact and read it through at least once.

✎ **How did Thomas James use the Canal to seek his freedom?**

✎ **Who helped Thomas James escape to Canada?**

✎ **What was the goal/purpose for the creator/author? What or whose perspective is missing?**

Common Reading: Captain Context



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Captain Context



Your task is to determine the historical context for the document/artifact.

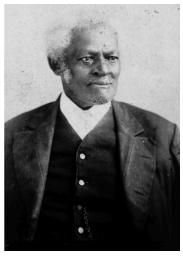
In order to do this task, answer the following questions:

✎ **How did Thomas James use the Canal to seek his freedom?**

✎ **Who helped Thomas James escape to Canada?**

✎ **When and where was the artifact created/written? What do you know about this time and place?**

Common Reading: The Connector



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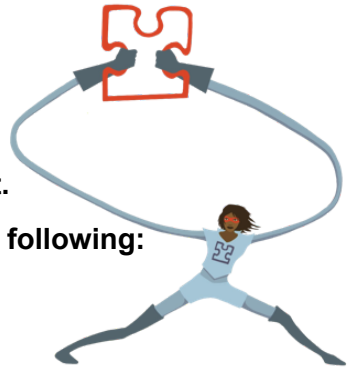
The Connector



Your task is to determine the "gist" (main idea) of the document/artifact.

In order to do this task, read the document/artifact and then answer the following:

✎ How did Thomas James use the Canal to seek his freedom?

✎ Who helped Thomas James escape to Canada?

✎ Complete the following statement:

"This document says that...

Name: **Date:** **Class:**

Constructed Response Questions - CRQ

CRQ Set 1 Directions: Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document in the space provided. Base your answer to question 1 on Document 1 below and on your knowledge of social studies.

Document 1

Sarah Johnson Interview

"The 'Old Master' died, and I heard they were going to sell the family silver, the furniture, and me – things like that.

That evening, I tied some bread into the corner of an old dress and left. I followed the North Star. When it was cloudy, I followed the direction of the wild geese—north to freedom. I was about 13 years old, my clothes were mostly rags, and I had pieces of quilts tied around my feet for shoes.

I stopped in Olean and asked a man for something to eat. They had never seen a Black person before and called me a black bear. Dr. Mead took me home, fed me, and gave me clothes."

Source: Sarah Johnson, interview with Olean High School students, 1901 (adapted)

Note: Sarah Johnson escaped enslavement in Maryland at about age 13 and came to Olean, NY by foot in 1833. She became a midwife, married a Black barber, and lived with her family in Olean for nearly 70 years.

1. Explain the **historical circumstances** that led Sarah Johnson to finding a home in Olean, NY.

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Document 2

Thomas James Autobiography

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Source: Life of Rev. Thomas James, by Himself: James, Thomas, 1804-1891 (Adapted)

2A. Based on this excerpt, explain Thomas James' **purpose** for writing and publishing this autobiography in New York State. Use and **explain evidence** from the text to support your answer.

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2B. To what extent is this excerpt a **reliable** or **unreliable** source of evidence about slavery or attitudes about slavery in Western NY in the 1800s? Use evidence from the letter to support your answer.

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Question 3 – Documents 1 and 2

3. Identify and explain **a similarity or a difference** between the ideas presented in these documents. Use **evidence from each document** to support your answer.

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