



## Buildings Talk

Zoning laws define the size and design of buildings in a city and how these buildings can and cannot be used. This in turn affects where citizens live, work and play in a city; how they use their city. Studying these buildings tells students what was happening when they were built. It also tells students how people lived then and what their values were. The purpose of this activity is to give students an opportunity to use the buildings of New York City as original sources to learn about the city's history. Students will be called on to use information they have and combine it with what they see to take a look at the results of historical decisions. Students will be asked to focus on the results of some early zoning regulations in Manhattan.

### Background Information:

In 1916 New York City was the first city in the United States to create a city-wide Zoning Resolution. This was done as a reaction to the construction of the Equitable Building (located at 120 Broadway). The building was so much taller and so much bigger than its neighbors that it blocked the windows of these buildings, diminishing the availability of sunshine and fresh air for the people who lived and worked in them.

The **Zoning Resolution of 1916** established height controls and required that New York buildings have setbacks (sort of like a wedding cake) to allow sunlight and air to reach the streets below. It also divided the city into *use districts* (residential, business, retail, and unrestricted), *area districts*, and *height districts*.

**In 1961** the city changed these zoning regulations and setbacks were no longer required. New and better building materials and designs had been introduced. These advancements allowed for freer flow of air and sunlight through newly constructed buildings. Therefore, buildings constructed in New York City after this date had more open space inside and were allowed to be the same size from street to roof.

### Activity 1

Before the NY SKYRIDE experience discuss the concept of zoning laws and setbacks with your students. Prepare them to look for buildings and skyscrapers **with setbacks**. These buildings will have been built after 1916 and before 1961 (in theory but, of course, there are always exceptions).

Have your students compare notes and discuss their findings about setbacks after the NY SKYRIDE experience.



## Activity 2

After taking an initial look at setbacks via the NY SKYRIDE, reinforce your student's observations about the zoning laws in the city by having them visit the Empire State Building Observatory. Ask them to note the following as they make observations from the Observatory:

The number of buildings they see with setbacks.

The buildings that are situated around the buildings with setbacks.

Where they see the largest cluster of buildings with setbacks.

Where they see almost no buildings with setbacks.

To get an even better up-close look at setbacks, visit the following additional buildings with your students:

The Chrysler Building – 405 Lexington Avenue

The Chanin Building – 122 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street

Have your students photograph or sketch these buildings with setbacks.

## Activity 3

Not everyone feels that the use of zoning is a good thing. Help your students informally debate the pros and cons of zoning as they see it.

When you return to the classroom, have your students research the thoughts of others about zoning regulations.

**FYI** the city of Huston, Texas has no zoning, by choice.



### Good Websites About Zoning Regulations in New York City:

1. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zonehis.shtml> --- This is the Website of the New York City Department of City Planning. It's chocked full of information!
2. [http://www.tenant.net/Other\\_Laws/zoning/zontoc.html](http://www.tenant.net/Other_Laws/zoning/zontoc.html) --- This site provides a handbook for understanding New York City zoning.
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/14/realestate/14GH-Home.html?ex=1331524800&en=ad739d7664c2dc40&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&mc=rss> --- This is a link to an interesting article about zoning variances that appeared in the New York Times in March, 2007. It gives some zoning issues to ponder.
4. <http://www.nyc-architecture.com/LM/LM059.htm> -- This website has photographs of the Equitable Building at 120 Broadway.
5. <http://www.greatgridlock.net/NYC/nyc1a.html> -- This link provides information about several of Manhattans early skyscrapers.

### Good Websites for Photographs of New York Skyscrapers

1. <http://www.petergof.com/nyc/skyscrapers.htm> --- This site has photographs for many of New York City's modern buildings that allow the viewer to easily see the effects of zoning regulations.
2. <http://www.greatgridlock.net/> --- You have to drill down a bit but if you persist you're rewarded with some nice photographs of New York City skyscrapers as well as some information about each.
3. <http://www.wirednewyork.com/skyscrapers/> --- This site has photographs of New York City buildings as well as information about the architects who designed them.
4. <http://www.mcny.org/> --- This is the official site of the Museum of the City of New York. The museum has a nice collection of photographs of the city.
5. [http://www.skyscraper.org/home\\_flash.htm](http://www.skyscraper.org/home_flash.htm) --- This is the official site of the Skyscraper Museum in New York City. It has lots and lots of good information about skyscrapers.
6. <https://www.nyhistory.org/web/> --- This is the official site for the New-York Historical Society. It's a wonderful place to find all kinds of information about New York City.



## Imagined Sites!

This activity focuses students' attention on art that can be found in public places in New York City. An exhibit of photographs showing proposals for art in public places, *Imagined Sites #6*, created by artists from New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) for the entryway to the NY SKYRIDE is used as the basis for this activity. Through this exhibit students will be introduced to the concept and historical purposes of public art and encouraged to create their own art for public spaces.

### Activity

Gather students around the photographic exhibit, *Imagined Sites #6*, located in the entryway to NY SKYRIDE and discuss the works of art presented here by the FIT artists. All the works presented are virtual. The students actually created the pieces of art that you see in the photographs then they inserted them via computer (Photoshop) into the public spaces to create the scene captured in the exhibit.

Here are a few questions to help your students focus:

1. What makes you notice the work of art in each photograph?
2. Does the piece make you think first or feel first?
3. Does the piece honor someone? If so whom does it honor?
4. Does the piece give you information?
5. Does the piece make you notice the setting around it?
6. How do you think this piece was created?
7. Do you think the piece was designed for the setting or did the artist design the piece first then look for an appropriate setting?
8. Is the piece beautiful? Why do you feel as you do?
9. When you look at this work of art can you think of additional settings for it in a city?
10. Does the piece call to mind other types of art --- music maybe?
11. How does each work of art contribute to the space in which it's located?

Have students choose their favorite work of art presented in the exhibit and explain why it's their favorite.

As you explore New York City have students point out spaces that would be enhanced by art --- and explain why.

When you return to your classroom have students discuss ideas for art in public places that would enhance their community.



### Materials Needed

Student imagination!

### Good Websites for Learning About Art in Public Places

1. Just go to Yahoo and enter "Art in Public Places" and you can see what cities around the world have commissioned. You will be amazed!!
2. <http://www.christojeanneclaude.net/> -- This is the website of Jeanne- Claude and Christo, the creators of the Gates in Central Park and other works of public art.
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/thegates/html/artists.html> --- More about Jeanne-Claude and Christo.
4. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/artcom/html/home/home.shtml> --- This is the website for the Art Commission of the City of New York.
5. <http://www.blueofthesky.com/publicart/index.htm> --- This is a link to a Public Art curriculum created by a high school teacher in Harlem.
6. <http://www.zhaosuikang.com/Hmain.html> --- This is the website of one of the FIT faculty that advises the FIT artists. He has done a number of public art projects throughout the United States.



## Traffic in New York City - Is There A Problem? [See Student Worksheet F](#)

This activity focuses on the issues that travel (vehicular and pedestrian) within a city creates. On first blush this seems like a straightforward issue but in reality it is quite complicated. This activity will take your students on a tour of New York City in search of all the systems used to control the flow of people and vehicles traveling there. The activity will lead students to consider city design, efforts to calm traffic, signs and signals, law enforcement, social rules, etc. In the process they will also learn some interesting history of New York City.

### Activity

Here is a statement from the book ***American Law Enforcement: A History*** by David Johnson that presents an interesting picture of how traffic affects life in a city:

*The movement of goods and people within the metropolis was a basic necessity which various kinds of behavior constantly jeopardized. Horse car drivers, for instance, frequently raced one another through the streets, paying no attention to the discomfort of their passengers or the danger to pedestrians. Wagon drivers and coachmen often disputed rights-of-way, sometimes to the point of assaulting one another. Pedestrians wandered haphazardly across the streets. At busy intersections, it was every man for himself as dozens of drivers sought to force their way through a maze of competing vehicles.*

Read the quote above to your students and tell them that **Their Mission is to:**

**Take a look at New York City's efforts to create an equitable and safe flow of people and vehicle travel within the city and evaluate how effective it is.**

Present the following New York traffic systems and have your students discuss what they think, without seeing the systems, the pros and cons of each might be:

### New York City Traffic Systems

**Split Phasing Traffic Signals** --- Pedestrians and vehicles are constantly in a fight for the right of way. If there were no means to regulate or control who uses the street and when, chaos would prevail. Have your students think about and discuss what happens when a traffic signal is "out". But even with working traffic signals there are still problems. What happens when a vehicle wants to turn and a pedestrian wants to cross the same space at the same time? To address this problem, NYC uses *split phasing*. Here's how it works: **Phase One** --- traffic on one street at an intersection is allowed to advance ahead and make turns, while traffic on the cross street is stopped.

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**Phase Two** --- traffic on the cross street is allowed to advance straight ahead while traffic on the other street is stopped. Vehicles wishing to turn from the cross street are not allowed to move. **Phase Three** --- vehicles on the cross street are allowed to advance straight ahead **and** make turns.

**Thru Streets** --- The speed at which vehicles can move through a city is very important. Before Manhattan created *Thru Streets*, the speed on its eastbound streets was an average of 4.8 miles an hour and 4.2 miles per hour on its westbound streets. Ugh! Beginning in the fall of 2002 the city designated five (5) pairs of streets as *Thru Streets* on which no turns are allowed. Here are these pairs of streets: 36<sup>th</sup>/37<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup> /46<sup>th</sup>, 49/50, 53<sup>d</sup>/54<sup>th</sup>, 59<sup>th</sup>/60<sup>th</sup>. One street in each pair accommodates eastbound traffic and the other accommodates westbound traffic --- on the section of these streets between Third and Sixth Avenues.

**Traffic Calming Measures** --- New York is using a host of new techniques to manage the flow of traffic and pedestrians. Three of these are

Pedestrian Refuges – small islands in the middle of a two-way street that allow pedestrians to cross in stages.

All-Pedestrian Phases --- red lights on **both** streets at an intersection which allows all pedestrians to cross at once, when no traffic at all is moving.

Roadway Color or Texture --- the use of textures and color of the street surfaces to give a better definition of the crossing area.

**Street Repair** --- New York City is so large and has so much vehicular traffic that street repair is a constant activity. Here are the most common street repair problems that occur in the city:

Ponding --- the buildup of water on the roadway due to poor drainage.

Sinkholes --- deep holes, usually have jagged edges.

Hummocks --- bumps created by a heavy flow of traffic, usually at busy intersections.

Potholes --- shallow holes that display an alternative bottom surface, usually dirt or gravel rather than asphalt.

Damaged Manhole Covers --- present a problem when they are damaged and placed either above or below the street surface.

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Misaligned Street Hardware --- present a problem when they are above or below the street surface, cracked or missing!

Open Repair Cuts in the Street Surface --- usually the result utility repairs and usually bear colored markings.

**Traffic Light Push Buttons** --- Many of New York City's traffic signals are controlled by the New York City Department of Transportation's (DOT) Traffic Management Center (TMC) in Long Island City. This is accomplished via cables connecting the TMC to every traffic signal in the city. This allows the length of the traffic signal to be changed as the flow of vehicular traffic demands. However, another, older system for controlling the flow of traffic is available to pedestrians. This system is usually found at the intersection of a major roadway and a side street. These are traffic light buttons or push buttons or *semi-actuated-signals* as traffic engineers call them. As these buttons are wearing out, the city is not repairing them.

**Divide your students into teams** and assign each team one of the 5 methods of controlling vehicular and pedestrian traffic in New York City listed above. As your students explore the city each team is responsible for noting the presence of their assigned system and deciding how effective this system is. We have created Student Worksheet: *Taking A Look at Traffic Systems* for your use with this activity.

Have teams report in at the end of **each day** of your visit. Have them locate on a map of the city exactly where they noted their assigned system. Require each team to explain why they think their assigned system was used where it was. No other discussion is necessary.

### **When You Return to the Classroom**

When you return to the classroom, locate each group's findings on a map of New York City so students can clearly see the city's pattern of traffic safety systems.

Have each team present a report about their assigned traffic safety system. The report should include the following:

Where the system was found.

Why the team thinks the system was used in this location.

An evaluation of how well the system worked.

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What they would change about the system.

Any questions they would like to ask New York's Department of Transportation.

### **Materials Needed**

Student Worksheet: *Taking A Look at Traffic Systems*

Pencils or other writing tools

Cameras

Maps of the City of New York

A big map of the City of New York, if possible, for use back in the classroom



## On The Sidewalks of New York

[See Student Worksheet G](#)

These activities focus on the many functions of New York City's sidewalks. They are home to pedestrian passageways, streetlights, parking meters, trashcans, traffic signs, building entrances and trees. These activities require students to use their visual literacy to research the functions of New York City sidewalks. Students are asked to observe, keep data about and give their opinions of the city's sidewalks.

### Activity 1

Pedestrian comfort is of major concern when evaluating how well the sidewalks in a city function. The main measure of this is the number of people waiting to cross at an intersection or moving along the sidewalk at any point in time.

To have your students measure the comfort level of the sidewalks in New York City, have them keep data on what they observe at the following three locations:

In front of Lincoln Center.  
In front of St Patrick's Cathedral  
In front of Grand Central Station

To measure the comfort level of pedestrians walking on New York City streets, city officials in New York City use a rating system based on the amount of space available for walking. To help your students evaluate the streets in like manner, we have created Student Worksheet: *Evaluating How Easy It Is To Walk on New York City Sidewalks* for your use with this activity.

With the student worksheet in hand, position your students at each of the three suggested locations (one at a time) and have them observe the pedestrians at each location for about 30 minutes each. At 10 minute intervals have students discuss and record how they would sum up the pedestrian traffic for that period based on the variables on the worksheet --- the variables the city officials use.

Students do not need to carry out this research at the three sites in back-to-back fashion. The observations may be spread out over the course of your stay in the city.

Have students discuss what measures could be taken to relieve any crowded pedestrian traffic conditions they observe.

Ask students to select three streets in their home community. Have them predict which of these streets in their home community would fall into each of the Comfort Levels used by New York City officials.

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## Activity 2

Before your students leave each of the three sites at which they are observing pedestrians, have them take a look at **other uses of the sidewalks**. Have them look for the following:

- Parking meters --- Are they located on all these streets?
- Street lights --- Are they the same at all three sites?
- Street signs --- Do all sections of the city have the same kinds of signs?
- Trees --- Do they exist at all three sites?
- Entryways --- How do they vary at the three sites?

Have your students decide if there is any relationship between pedestrian traffic and the number of parking meters, street lights, street signs, trees or entryways there are at a given site.

### Materials Needed

Paper and pencils for noting research

A copy of Student Worksheet: *Evaluating How Easy It Is to Walk on New York City Sidewalks* for each student

Maps of New York City



## Marvel Comics Walking Tour of New York City

This activity takes students on a tour of New York City to many of the sites featured in the Marvel Comic's Super Heroes series. Through this tour students get an idea of how stories are developed and how familiar people, places and things become part of even the most over-the-top fanciful stories. In addition students will be called on to use map reading, visual organization and planning skills to develop the route for their walk.

### Activity

Present your students with maps of New York City and have them locate selected Marvel Comic sites from the list below that they would like to explore. The sites they select will become a tour of the City.

### New York City Sites That Appear in Marvel Comics

The Bowery  
City Hall  
The East Village  
Bleeker Street  
187 Chrystie Street  
666 Fifth Avenue  
East Thirty-ninth Street and Second Avenue  
Empire State University --- New York University  
Yancy Street --- Delancey Street  
Baxter Building/Four Freedoms Plaza (42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Madison Avenue)  
Chrysler Building (405 Lexington Avenue and East Forty-second Street)  
Empire State Building (350 Fifth Avenue between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets)  
United Nations Building (760 United Nations Plaza)  
The Gem Theatre (42<sup>nd</sup> Street between Broad way and Eighth Avenue)  
Hell's Kitchen  
Madison Square Garden  
Rockefeller Center  
New York Public Library (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street)  
Times Square  
Central Park  
The Frick Collection  
The Solomon Guggenheim Museum  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
American Museum of Natural History  
Columbia University  
Brooklyn Bridge  
Statue of Liberty

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After the sites are selected, have students use street maps of New York City to plan the precise route of their tour. Don't forget to consider how you will get to each site --- via foot power, subway or bus.

Assign different students or student teams the responsibility of describing what happened in the different comics at each of these locations. When you arrive at each of the selected locations have the assigned students/student teams tell the story (stories) that took place at this location.

At each site have students decide if they think the location is a good one for the story that took place here and why they feel as they do.

Have students compare the actual site to the depiction of it in the Super Heroes comic and describe the differences.

Have your students decide if they agree or disagree with the following statement:

*Super Heroes represent the potential within every individual to become extraordinary.*

Peter Sanders, author of *The Marvel Comics Guide to New York City*.

### **Back In the Classroom**

When you return to your classroom have students complete an outline or a storyboard for a Super Hero comic using sites and characters from their own lives

### **Materials Needed**

Marvel Comics for your ride to New York Here is a site for the Marvel Comics catalogue

<http://www.marvel.com/catalog/>

Maps of New York City

Cameras



## Mapping New York City

The fine arts students at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) have created a mural of New York City in the entryway to the NY SKYRIDE. It's a wonderful and most informative mural. The activities in this section use this mural to introduce students to some of the principles and concepts of city planning. They require students to conceptualize a *whole* from *disjointed parts*. They require students to use different perspectives and different views to create mental and visual maps. They also require students to use their geographical map-reading skills.

### Activity 1

**At the entrance to the NY SKYRIDE** you will find a mural created by the fine arts students at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). This mural presents New York City in several different formats. Using these different formats it documents the city and a bit of its history. As you are waiting for the NY SKYRIDE gather your students and study the mural. See if your students can find sections of the mural that:

- tell about the services people who live in New York City receive
- show the geometry of city streets
- give you the feel of the city's hustle and bustle
- introduce you to its residents
- indicate a simpler, less complicated life
- point to the future
- indicate the past

Have your students discuss what's missing in the mural. What needs to be shown to get a full picture of life in New York City? Question students about how they would represent each of these missing elements.

Have your students describe how they would have depicted New York City here at the entrance to the NY SKYRIDE.



## Activity 2

After discussing the mural created by the FIT artists, focus your students' attention onto a small section near the right end of the mural. There you will find a street grid with no names or symbols or any indication of the built environment. That's because the FIT artists left this section for your students to complete. As you're gathered around the mural begin a discussion of how you would design and plan a section of New York City, not a mural or representation of the city, but an actual section of the city.

Assign students to be responsible for thinking about each of the following:

- Where would you build housing for people? What would it look like?
- Where would you place the schools? Why?
- Where would you allow shops and businesses to locate? Why?
- Do you need services like fire and rescue, water and sewer in this new neighborhood?
- Would you allow cars in your neighborhood? Do you need a traffic study!
- Will you try to get a subway stop in your neighborhood?
- Would you have green space in your new neighborhood?
- Is there anything you would specifically NOT want in your neighborhood.
- Who makes the decisions about what goes into a new neighborhood?
- What are the rules and regulations that would govern such decisions?

You won't have time to complete your city plan while at the NY SKYRIDE but we've provide you with a copy of the grid on the mural to download when you're back in your classroom. You can complete your planning then.

**As your class explores New York City** have students focus on the above issues. Discuss the composition of the different neighborhoods as you go along: Are they all alike? What seems to be common to each and what is different? Etc.

Assign students to take photographs throughout the city as appropriate to help them remember the different neighborhoods.

### Materials Needed:

- Student Worksheet *FIT Street Grid* --- For use back in the classroom
- Cameras
- New York City Maps

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## Pay Attention To Color!

Architects often use colors to call attention to a particular feature of a building or to enhance an otherwise uninteresting building. We often take this use of color for granted but a whole new world opens up when you pay attention to it. This activity requires students to use their visual literacy and take note of the built environment in detail.

### Activity

Take a walk with your class around the Empire State Building's neighborhood and notice the colors that the architects used to get your attention! Decide if this use of color worked. Decide what gets attention and why.

Have students list and take photographs of the places that colors does get their attention. Have them discuss the following:

- The exact color (s) they noticed.
- Where the color was placed.
- In what form the color appeared.
- Did the use of color fit in with the rest of the buildings around?
- What colors worked the best?
- Did the color affect the mood of the building?
- What was the purpose the color served if it was other than to get attention?
- What they would change about the way the color was used.

Have students photograph or sketch one building with color that they liked and one building without color they thought was particularly boring.

Discuss how color could be used to make some of the buildings they saw more interesting. Have students add color in some form to their sketches of the boring buildings.

**Some research, just for fun** ---- Have students ask some of the tenants inside New York buildings to describe the outside of their building. We're wondering if buildings with color are more easily described than those without color. Your research hypothesis might be something like the following:

*If a building has color on the outside, this color is always correctly identified while other descriptive components on the outside of a building are misrepresented or overlooked in describing that building.*



(We have always found the people at the Information Desk inside New York's buildings or the employees inside shops, etc to be extremely gracious about answering our questions but we can not promise this is always so.)

Have your students take full color, streetscape photographs of New York City. When you return to school, convert some of these photographs to black & white. Present both sets of photographs to your students and have them decide which they like better. Discuss what color adds and why. Discuss when color just does not work as well as black and white.

#### **Materials Needed**

Cameras

Paper and pencil for recording research data



## Where Are You?

The purpose of this activity is to enhance students' spatial orientation and map reading skills. In addition it calls student attention to the details of New York City's built environment and puts a face to some of the history-making sites in the city.

### Activity

Prepare your students for the NY SKYRIDE experience by reminding them that the NY SKYRIDE will take them all over New York City and give them a birds-eye-view of the built environment from the top down. If they listen and look carefully they will be able to see and understand how the city is laid out. If they don't pay attention, they will have no idea where they are.

Immediately after the NY SKYRIDE experience give students paper and pencil and have them attempt to draw a map of New York City using the route of the NY SKYRIDE. This is not easy because the NY SKYRIDE experience is not intended to be an accurate map of the city.

Discuss and compare the student maps.

Help students compare their maps with a real map of New York City, being careful to note North, South, East and West and discussing from which direction they had traveled to reach New York.

**Now to get a better map of the city take your students on a walking tour using the following map:**

Beginning at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 34<sup>th</sup> Street, have students walk the blocks around the Empire State Building in this fashion:

1. Walk 8 blocks north
2. Walk 3 blocks west
3. Walk 10 blocks south
4. Walk 4 blocks east

Have students note if and where they find the following --- Grand Central Station, Madison Square Park, Macy's Department Store, the Chrysler Building, Penn Station, the Flatiron Building.

Have students map their route on a New York City map.



### **Materials Needed**

Drawing supplies for making maps  
New York City Street Maps  
Compasses (optional)

### **Good Websites About Map Making**

1. <http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/#hmc> --- You can find anything you ever wanted to know about maps on this site.
2. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pmhtml/panhome.html> --- This is a site run by the Library of Congress with a wealth of information. It introduces the concept of and presents panoramic maps used mainly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
3. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/guide/gmilltoc.html> -- This is another good site from the Library of Congress.
4. <http://www.cartotalk.com/> --- This is a good site for and about cartographers.
5. <http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html> --- This website provides links to all kinds of primary sources.

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## Sensing New York City

The NY SKYRIDE uses motion to awaken your senses and focus your attention on its message. Cities also do similar kinds of things to attract attention and make people feel in certain ways about it. The purpose of the following activities is to have students attend to the ways the built environment in New York City plays to your senses. Students are then asked to use their skills with words to create their own sensory descriptions of New Your City.

### Activity 1

As your students explore the city have them take note of their senses that are awakened or used.

Where do they notice color first?  
What sounds get their attention?  
When and where is movement the first thing they notice?  
What aromas did they notice? Where?  
When and where did the *whole* of the city seem to change? Describe the things that helped to make this happen.

After getting initial reactions, ask students to use sensory words to describe the city, i.e. cold, hot, bright, dull, groovy, popping, hopping, sleepy, etc. Then ask them what they saw that made them use these words.

As you walk through the city ask students to evaluate **each intersection** and then to give this intersection **a descriptive word**.

When you return to your hotel, on the bus or over a meal have several students present their words for a certain intersection and have the rest of the class try to guess which intersection this was.

### Activity 2

This activity is intended to take sensing New York City to an even more sensory level. Try one or all of the following:

Have your students present **rhyming words** that describe each intersection they visited that day.

Choose five NYC intersections that your class has explored and have students **hum them**.

Have your students **sketch an intersection** they explored in the City.

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Have your students create **Hinky Pinkies** for New York City. Hinky Pinkies are very short poetry forms. Using two rhyming words to define something or answer a question, they can be written in either of two ways:

Definition form --- A sneaky insect: *sly fly*

Question/answer form --- What did the fish say to the bait? *squirm worm!*

Have students use **onomatopoeia** (words or groupings of words that imitate the sounds it is describing) to describe the activity they see on New York streets.

Have your students create a verbal or written description of the city **using the number words from one to ten** --- and do it in a manner that is more than just counting what is there.

#### **Materials Needed**

Paper and pencil to record student responses



## City Patterns

The patterns of New York City tell a lot about its history. The NY SKYRIDE and the Empire State Building Observatory are two great places to see New York City patterns. The purpose of this activity is to help students see patterns in the built environment where they might not have looked for them before.

### Activity 1

Prepare your students for their experiences at the NY SKYRIDE by giving them the following overview of the NY SKYRIDE:

*You're going on a ride through the city as though you are a bird and can go anywhere. Keep your eyes open. Note the shapes and patterns made by streets, trees, buildings. Note the size of things. Note the location of things. Notice what's in the center of things and what's on the edge of things.*

After experiencing the NY SKYRIDE take a moment and discuss the discoveries your students made:

### Discoveries your students might have made:

Part of the city looks haphazardly put together.

Tall buildings are grouped together in certain areas of the city.

There are parts of the city with mainly lower buildings.

In the city north of Greenwich Village the street patterns form rectangles, equal in length with the east/west sides being longer than the north/south sides or streets.

Central Park is surrounded by tall buildings.

Central Park looks like it's the center of the city.

There are two rivers that come together to form a U at the southern end of the city.

City roofs are quite interesting!

There are several bridges crossing the East River.

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Have students visit the Observatory at the top of the Empire State Building and check out the patterns in the built environment that they noticed on the NY SKYRIDE.

After students experience the Observatory have them discuss whether their earlier observations developed after the NY SKYRIDE were confirmed, changed or augmented by their visit to the Observatory.

Have students speculate about what these observed patterns of New York's built environment and its geography tell us about the city:

Which part of the city is the oldest? What makes you think this? What does this tell us about New York City?

Which part of the city has mixed zoning? What makes you think this? What does this tell us about New York City?

Which part of the city looks planned? What makes you think this? What does this tell us about New York City?

Which part of the city looks like it has the most residents? What makes you think this? What does it tell us about New York City?

Etc.

## Activity 2

Explore New York City to see if your students' bird's eye views can be confirmed by an on-the-ground- view. Here are suggested sites to visit to confirm or negate student views:

Central Park  
Rockefeller Center  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Lower East Side Tenement Museum  
Cathedral of Saint John Divine  
South Street Seaport  
Greenwich Village  
Castle Clinton  
Queensboro Bridge

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Have your students study a map of New York City and plan the order in which these sites will be visited.

At each site discuss with students whether their on-the-ground-bird's-eye-view confirms or negates their view from the Empire State Building Observatory and the NY SKYRIDE.

### **Materials Needed**

New York City Street Maps for each student

### **Good Websites About Maps**

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pmhtml/panhome.html> --- This is a site maintained by the Library of Congress. It provides lots of information about panoramic maps.

2. <http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/#hmc> --- You can find anything you want to know about maps on this site.
3. <http://www.geography.wisc.edu/histcart/> --- This site is a good place for information about the history of map making.
4. <http://www.maphistory.info/> --- This site has a lot of information about the history of map making. But, it's unclear who is the originator of the site.
5. <http://mathdl.maa.org/convergence/1/?pa=content&sa=viewDocument&nodeId=646&bodyId=1058> --- This site is all about mathematical geography.
6. <http://www.ganyc.org/> --- This is the site of the Guides Association of New York City. These guides know everything about walking the city!



## Creating Original Documents Recording Your New York City Visit

The purpose of this activity is to have students keep a written or visual record of their time in New York City. In the process of doing this they will be creating original documents that can be used in the future to present a picture of life in New York City in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### Activity

Have your students keep a written, videoed and/or a drawn journal of their visit to New York City. Points they should be sure to include are:

- What they saw, heard, smelled and sensed in the city.
- Observations about the way people use the city.
- Surprises they discovered.
- Information about the way the city treats visitors.
- How different places in the city made them feel.
- The food they ate, where they ate it and how they liked it.
- The means of transportation they used.
- How New York City is different from their home community.
- How New York City is similar to their home community.
- How they would change New York City.

Some students might want to record information about just one aspect of the city such as:

- The city's street signs
- Everything that's on top of the buildings
- The subway
- Languages heard on the streets

Some students might want to create a panoramic map of New York City. A good resource for creating such a map is <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pmhtml/panhome.html>.

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Before leaving New York City pay a visit to the **New York Historical Society** and explore The Luce Center, their art of New York City treasures. It's a wonderful place and will inspire your students to observe as much of the city as they can!

### **Back at School**

When you return to your school have your students edit and complete the original documents they created in New York City. Then invite friends and other students to view them with you and your students to learn about your class's visit to New York City.

You may want to have your students add music to their presentation. You might also want to have a small reception after the presentation/performance.

### **Materials Needed**

Camera for videoing your class's visit to New York City

Art materials for students who want to draw their visit to New York City

Access to the internet or other research tool



## What Was Here Before? Check It Out

[See Student Worksheet J](#)

The activities in this section help students think through what existed in Manhattan before the current structures were built. They require students to use temporal concepts and think through city planning from the viewpoint of future use and changing needs. They also present some very interesting information about the history of New York City. These activities address the some of the issues around historic preservation.

### Activity 1

This activity presents your students with six (6) New York sites to visit. These sites are famous today but they were perhaps even more interesting in their previous lives! They certainly indicate how life in the city has changed over the years.

Provide each of your students with a copy of Student Worksheet: *But What Am I Now?* for use with this activity. Discuss each of the sites to be located and find it on a New York City map. Have your students speculate what this area of the city looked like when used as described on the student worksheet.

Have students speculate what they will find at the site today.

Plan your route through the city to visit **each** of the sites presented.

When your students arrive at each of the six sites have them enter the description of the current use of this site on their worksheets. Then have your students decide if they think the changes in this site were good one or bad and why.

Have your students observe the activity at each site and the surrounding neighborhood then address the following questions:

- Was the structure originally located on this site raised or re-designed to allow for the present-day use?
- How different from the description on the student worksheet is the use of this site today?
- What occurred to create the need for this change?
- Is the current structure on this site appropriate for its use?
- Is the current structure on this site appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood?

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How should a city go about deciding what buildings or green spaces should be saved and what should not be saved?  
How important is the way a structure looks?  
How important is it to protect sites that tell of our history?

Have your students speculate about future uses for this site.

### Activity 2

Engage your students in a debate about the economic advisability of historic preservation.

*Which do you think is more important, saving that which tells of our past or focusing on our current and future needs? How should our money be spent?*

### Activity 3

Visit the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to research the New York City buildings that are currently designated historic landmarks.

Municipal Building  
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North,  
New York, New York 10007  
tel: 212-669-7700; fax: 212-669-7960.

**You must request an appointment to do research here. Below is a link that will allow you access to their Records Access Request Form:**

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/faqs/faq\\_records.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/faqs/faq_records.shtml)

### Activity 4

To sample some of New York City's preservation efforts, take your students on a tour of one or all of the following:

**City Hall** (completed in 1812) --- Tours offered on weekdays

**Tweed Courthouse** (completed in 1881) --- Tours offered on weekdays

**Gracie Mansion** (completed in 1799) --- Tours offered on Wednesdays

For information on these tours: 212-NEW-YORK.

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### Materials Needed

A copy of Student Worksheet: *But What Am I Now?* for each student.  
Maps of New York City

### Good Websites About Historic Preservation

1. <http://www.achp.gov/economicstudies.html> --- This is the official website for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. It's a good reference for studies on the economic impact of historic preservation.
2. [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs\\_haer/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/) --- This is part of the Library of Congress's site. It contains The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) collections of prints and photographs. These collections document achievements in architecture, engineering, and design in the United States and its territories.
3. <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/sustainability/additional-resources/the-facts-about-preservation-a.html> --- This is a page within the National Trust for Historic Preservation's official website. It offers interesting information about preservation and sustainability.
4. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/home/home.shtml> --- This is the official site of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission. It has lots of information about preservation efforts in the city. It has maps of all of the city's designated Historic Districts.
5. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/artcom/html/tours/gracie.shtml> --- This site gives information about tours of Gracie Mansion.
6. [http://www.historichousetrust.org/item.php?i\\_id=15](http://www.historichousetrust.org/item.php?i_id=15) --- This is the site of the Historic House Trust of New York City. It provides information about Gracie Mansion and other houses of architectural and historic significance.
7. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/gracie.html> --- This site provides information about Gracie Mansion.
8. <http://www.newyorkled.com/cityhall.htm> --- This site has information about City Hall and other New York City sites.
9. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/artcom/html/tours/tweed.shtml> --- This site has information about Tweed Courthouse.



## What Are We To Think?

This set of activities requires students to use their skills of visual literacy, visual perception and visual memory. They will be asked to pay attention to and interpret the messages presented by the signs found on New York City buildings, in shop windows and on billboards. They will actually conduct some basic research on the streets of New York City to sample the effect these signs have on people. At the conclusion students will be asked to address some *freedom of speech* issues regarding signs in New York City. Times Square is the setting for these activities.

### Activity 1

This activity is designed to have students notice the *whole* of something.

Position your students at the **corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 45<sup>th</sup> Street**. There is a Swatch store at this location. Have everyone stand facing 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue with their backs to the entrance to the Swatch store. (If you have a large group, use all four corners of this intersection, placing small groups of students on each corner.)

Have your students QUICKLY look around. Give them about 60 seconds to do this. Then have them turn to face the store/building and ask them to:

1. Describe **THE** message they saw on the streets--- the overall message, not the message of any one sign.
2. Describe what caught their attention first --- it might have been a particular color, or movement, something large or something in a familiar form.
3. Think about the color they noticed first.
4. Describe the sounds they heard.
5. Describe what makes this intersection interesting to them.
6. Decide if this intersection would fit into their own neighborhood. Why or why not.

Discuss student descriptions/reports.

### Activity 2

This activity is intended to have students focus on the *details* of something.

Have students face the street and observe what's going on once again for another 60 seconds. Then have them face the building and answer the following questions:

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Which way would you go to attend a play at a theatre?

Name one (1) restaurant you saw on the street?

In which direction is there a clock on a building?

Which way would you go to buy jeans?

In which direction is the nearest police station?

Name/describe three (3) traffic signs that can be found at this intersection.

We are betting that your students will have a difficult time answering these questions. Discuss what prevents them from easily providing answers.

Have students name/describe everything they saw on the street.

### Activity 3

This activity is intended to help students focus on how the *details* of something contribute to the bigger *whole*. The message of the street signs is as it is for a reason. This activity will help students focus on the population to which the message of the signs is addressed.

This time have your students turn to observe the street and take some data on the pedestrians they see passing by:

What is the general age of the people you see passing by?

What gender are most of the people passing by?

Do you think most of the people are New Yorkers or visitors?

What do you think most of the people passing are doing?

What age group do you think the signs here are targeting?

Have students discuss their findings as a group.



#### Activity 4

This activity is a fun activity to further hone attention to detail.

This time have your students study for a longer time what's happening on the street in front of them. After doing so they will begin to isolate individual things. Familiar things will begin to take shape. Present them with a sheet of paper with the following words on it for them to locate. They are to look around them and locate:

----- se's

----- shey's

Both of these sets of letters appear on signs and can be observed on the street. They will be quite familiar words to most of the students. Both are recognizable, even with letters missing because of other characteristics --- color or shape, etc.

After students have located and identified the signs, discuss why it was easy to recognize the letter groupings.

#### Activity 5

This is an activity for self reflection. It helps students focus on what they like to have around them and how their choices affect their behavior. Here are some quick questions for discussion **as your class is standing in Times Square**:

Do you like places with lots of activity or places that are quiet?

What is your definition of a place with lots of activity? Is it lots of moving parts? Lots of noise? Lots of colors? Etc.

What is your definition of a place that is very quiet?

Does this street corner qualify as active or quiet in your opinion?

How does lots of activity make you feel?

How does a very quiet place make you feel?

Which kind of place (active or quiet) is a better place for you to study? Why?

There is no right or wrong answer to these questions.

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## Activity 6

This activity calls on students to give their opinion about city signs and Freedom of speech.

Read the **First Amendment to the US Constitution** to your students. Then have students discuss whether a city such as New York should have the right to say what signs can and can not be displayed within its city limits.

When you return to the classroom have students research **New York City Local Laws 14 and 31**.

### Materials Needed

A sheet of paper for each student on which is printed the two word groups presented above.

NYC City Regulations Governing Billboards

The First Amendment to the US Constitution

New York City Local Laws 14 and 31

### Good Websites About Signage in Cities

1. <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/books/munisigns.htm> --- This website appears to be a New York State Department of State of Local Services site that discusses municipal control of signage. It has a good section on regulations for commercial versus noncommercial signs.
2. <http://www.prweb.com/releases/nyc/billboards/prweb433594.htm> --- This is a copy of a news article written about New York City's action to control billboard advertising.
3. [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html) --- This is part of the official site of the National Archives. Here you can find copies of the United States Constitution.
4. <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/rightsof/speech.htm> --- This is part of the official website of the U.S. Department of State. This section discusses Freedom of Speech.



## The Rhythm of the Street Signs

[See Student Worksheet K](#)

New York City is home to over one million street signs. Each was carefully crafted to deliver its message to a certain segment of the City's population. The following activities require students to first notice these signs then to interpret city life from piecing together the story these signs tell. Students are then asked to provide a literary creation to tell the message of the New York City Street signs in a different way. This activity also provides an opportunity for students to present any issues they have regarding New York street signs directly to the city's Department of Transportation.

### Activity

This activity requires students to conduct on-the-spot research regarding the street signs found on New York City Streets.

Present each student with a copy of Student Worksheet: *New York City Street Sign Research*. This worksheet lists the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's standard categories of street signs and provides space for data collection. Discuss each category and make sure your students have the same definition and vision of what a sign in each category would look like. Use the *Observations Section* as you wish. Here are a few pieces of information you might have students included in this section ---

- How drivers were obeying the signs.
- How visible the signs were.
- How they would evaluate the usefulness of the signs.
- Any confusion the signs caused.
- Etc.

Position your students on a prominent New York City street. Have them walk this street for about 6 blocks using the student worksheet to note **ALL** the signs they see.

Have students photograph any signs that are in need of repair or any situation that seems to be a problem or about which they are concerned.

Repeat the same data gathering activity at two additional locations (at least two additional) in the city.

Have students discuss and summarize the data they collected:

- Into what categories do most of the signs fall?
- Who is the intended audience for most of the signs?
- What do the signs tell you about their locations?

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Are the signs effective?  
Would you **re-place** any of the signs? If so, what would you put in this sign's place?  
Would you **remove** any of the signs? Why or why not?  
Which signs improved the sites where they were placed? Why?  
How is the use of signs different in the more residential areas of the city?  
How could the city use street signs to calm the traffic?

Save the worksheets and the data gathered for use when you return to your classroom.

Have your students report any issues or concerns they have with New York City's street signs to the city's Department of Transportation. Here is a website that explains how to make concerns known to the city:

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/picture\\_video\\_pilot.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/picture_video_pilot.html)

## Activity 2

This activity requires students to sum up New York City street signs using a literary means of communication rather than hard research.

Ask students to think carefully about the street signs they researched in the city. Then ask each student to give you three (3) words that describe the street signs they researched. These can be any words that they think are related to the signs. They might be words from the signs themselves or words that describe the signs.

Have each student write each of these words on an index card. Gather these cards and mix them all together.

Next, ask students to create quick, short poems about New York City street signs. This should be done quickly, off-the-top-of their-heads. If students have difficulty beginning their poems have them draw a few index cards from your collection and use the words found on these cards as starters.

**This activity works best if it moves quickly.** Do not give students much time to prepare. You need to create a rhythm and keep it going!! The words will come.

Record your students' *Street Sign Poems*.



### **Materials Needed**

Student Worksheet: *New York City Street Sign Research*

Cameras

Index card for each student

Pen/pencil

Recording device for recording student poems

### **Good Websites for Information About Street Signs.**

1. <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/Signs/index.htm> --- This is part of the official website for the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. It has an excellent Traffic Signs IQ Test!
2. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/picture\\_video\\_pilot.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/misc/html/picture_video_pilot.html) --- Via this site students can submit visual images of issues with New York City Street signs and/or report other street issues directly to the NYC Department of Transportation.
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/home/home.shtml> --- This is the official site for the New York City Department of Transportation. It has lots of information about city projects to improve transportation and quality of life. *Green* concerns are discussed here as well.



## City Bridges

This activity takes students on a walk across the Queensboro Bridge and the Brooklyn Bridge to examine not only one of the most fascinating aspect of a city, its bridges, but also to take a look at the importance methods of ingress and egress are to the economy and culture of a city. The activity also focuses on the availability and suitability of the bridges for different kinds of traffic.

### Background Information about the Queensboro Bridge for Teachers:

#### A description of the Queensboro Bridge ---

“the chords of the cantilever are connected by a series of eyebars. Unlike most cantilever bridges, there is no center suspended span between the counterbalanced arms of the cantilever span. Two large cantilever spans of 1,182 feet and 984 feet, which are connected by a smaller span of 630 feet over Blackwell's Island. The main spans are flanked by side spans of 469½ feet on the Manhattan side, and 459 feet on the Queens side. Including approaches, the total length of the Queensboro Bridge measures 7,449 feet. Four 350-foot steel towers (originally topped with tall spires) were constructed on stone piers to support the bridge. The two 80-foot-wide decks had a greater vehicular capacity than R.S. Buck's previous design. Masonry approaches were to accommodate the passage of local street traffic, and on the Manhattan side, a marketplace lined with Guastavino tile.”

#### Some history of the Queensboro Bridge ---

In 1962 Robert Moses planned to construct a 2,000-car parking garage at the Manhattan end of the Queensboro Bridge. Doing so would have required the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority to condemn a square block of buildings. The proposal had the support of the New York City Planning Commission, which was also controlled by Moses.

Soon after he became New York City Traffic Commissioner, Henry Barnes soon learned more details about the proposal.

(The following is from Robert A. Caro's The Power Broker):  
“And then they revealed that atop the garage was to be built a seven-story department store that would be leased to Macy's. To his astonishment, Barnes realized that Moses was planning to use powers and funds of a public authority ostensibly set up to aid transportation to condemn a score of buildings, evict the tenants, and turn it over, complete with Authority-financed parking facilities right in the store, to a private

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business. And he further realized, as the conversation unfolded, that the planning had advanced to the point at which even the details of the lease - its term was to be fifty years - had been finalized, and that Moses had persuaded Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Jr. to approve."

From *A Historic Overview of the Queensboro Bridge* found on [www.nycroads.com](http://www.nycroads.com)

### Activity 1

Have your students walk **across the Queensboro Bridge** and back --- or at least partway across the bridge.

As they are walking across the bridge, have your students describe the bridge in terms of its **structure and design**. Have them do this by analyzing it based on the observations they make about the following:

- The supports on the bridge.
- The spans on the bridge.
- Approaches to the bridge.
- The towers on the bridge.
- The truss work on the bridge.
- Shapes seen in the bridge.
- Patterns seen on the bridge.

As they are walking back to Manhattan on the bridge, have your students describe the Queensboro Bridge in terms of its **function**. Have them do this by analyzing it based on the observations they make about the following:

- The number of traffic lanes there are on the bridge today.
- Provisions for pedestrian traffic.
- Provisions for bike traffic.
- Lanes used for vehicular traffic
- Provisions for train traffic
- Compare what they see to Robert Moses' vision for the bridge. Was his vision realized (See Background Information provided above)?
- Approaches to and from the bridge.
- Other services that are available on the bridge.
- Other means of transportation available in the area.
- The signage on the bridge.

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Have your students take photographs of Manhattan from several different locations on and off the bridge.

## Activity 2

Have your students walk **across the Brooklyn Bridge** and back.

As they are walking across the bridge, have your students describe the bridge in terms of its **structure and design**. Have them do this based on their observations of the following:

- The supports on the bridge.
- The spans on the bridge.
- Approaches to the bridge.
- The towers on the bridge.
- The truss work on the bridge.
- The shapes found on the bridge.
- The patterns found on the bridge.

As they are walking back to Manhattan on the bridge, have your students describe the Brooklyn Bridge in terms of its **function**. Have them do this based on their observations of the following:

- The number of traffic lanes there are on the bridge today.
- Provisions for pedestrian traffic.
- Provisions for bike traffic.
- Lanes used for vehicular traffic
- Provisions for train traffic
- Approaches to and from the bridge.
- Other means of transportation available nearby.
- The signage on the bridge

Have your students take photographs of Manhattan from several different locations on and off the bridge.

## Activity 3

After walking both bridges begin a discussion with your students about **bicycle and pedestrian activity** on the each bridge:

*Should bikes and pedestrians be allowed on the bridges? Why or why not?*

*Is it economically advisable to make modifications on the bridges just for cyclist and pedestrians?*

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Have your students offer issues that the city would need to address to make pedestrian and bike traffic on the bridges as safe and convenient as possible.

Have your students **debate the following issue from both sides:**

*Should taxpayer dollars be used to create bike paths throughout the city and across the bridges?*

Position #1: You love to cycle and regularly ride your bike to work across the Queensboro Bridge

Position #2: You think this emphasis on “the greening of America” is hogwash and do not want to spend any more of the taxpayers’ dollars on such projects as bike paths. Bike riders create a dangerous situation for vehicles traffic.

#### **Activity 4**

Have your students relate both the Queensboro Bridge and the Brooklyn Bridge to the Golden Mean/Golden Ratio.

#### **Materials Needed**

The questions to be researched on the bridges.  
Paper and pencils so students can take notes  
Maps of New York City showing both the Queensboro and Brooklyn Bridges  
New York City Bike Safety Action Plan  
Binoclars  
Cameras

#### **Good Websites About New York City Bridges**

1. <http://www.pbs.org/greatprojects/> --- This is a wonderful PBS site that tells all about some of the greatest building projects in the United States. There is a separate section on building the George Washington Bridge in NYC.
2. <http://www.davefrieder.com/> --- This is Dave Freider’s website. He is a photographer and bridge expert. He has some wonderful photographs of many of New York City’s bridges.
3. <http://www.newyorkled.com/bridges.htm> --- This site gives photographs and videos of New York City bridges. It’s a very complete site with lots of good information.
4. <http://www.nycroads.com/crossings/brooklyn/> --- Go to this site for up-to-the-minute information about conditions on the Brooklyn Bridge. The site also has a very nice summary of the history and construction of the bridge along with some interesting photographs.

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5. <http://www.transalt.org/files/resources/bridges/> --- This site provides information about walking, biking or skating across New York City's bridges.
6. <http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/bandt/index.html> --- This is the official website for the Metropolitan Transit Authority. It has information about all of New York City's bridges.
7. <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/dot/html/home/home.shtml> --- This is the official website for the New York City Department of Transportation.
8. <http://www.mcnyc.org/collections/abbott/a240-243.htm> --- This site has some really good photographs of the Queensboro Bridge.

### **Good Books About Bridges**

Burr, William **Report on Design and Construction of Queensboro Bridge** (New York, 1908)

Hopkins, H.J. **A Span of Bridges; An Illustrated History** (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1970)

Huxtable, Ada Louise **The Architecture of New York** (Garden City, Doubleday, 1964)

McCullough, David G. **The Great Bridge** (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1972)

New York City's MTA Brochure **Bridges and Tunnels Brochure**.

Reier, Sharon **The Bridges of New York** (New York, Quadrant Books, 1977)

Shannon, Rebecca Read **The City That Never Was** (New York, Penguin Group, Viking Press, 1988)

Steinman, David **The Builders of the Bridge: The Story of John Roebling and His Son** (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1945)

White, Norval and Willensky, Elliot, eds. **AIA Guide to New York City, Third Edition** (San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988)

Winpenny, Thomas R., **Manhattan Bridge. The troubled story of a New York monument**. (Easton PA, Canal History and Technology Press in association with the Smithsonian Institution, 2004)



## Ladies' Mile

This activity focuses on the creation of the country's first department stores. It takes students on a walking tour of New York City's *Ladies' Mile*, to discover the changes in what was once a most fashionable section of the city. Students must use their skills of visual literacy and historical information to locate the city's built environment of the past as it is in the city today. Students are asked to decide for themselves which they find more appealing, the architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century or the architecture of today. The activity also addresses issues of historic preservation.

### Background Information

During the decades after the Civil War many changes occurred in New York City. Among these was a big increase in the city's commerce which caused the commercial areas to intrude northward into the previously mainly residential areas of the city between Union Square and Madison Square along Broadway and over to Sixth Avenue. As it just so happened, it was the custom for upper class women to go out alone without a chaperone **only** for the purpose of going shopping. Shopping was considered a necessity but it also served as an acceptable diversion for the ladies. As a result this area of the city soon became a prime shopping area for upper class ladies. This led to the rise of many specialty stores in the area and to the creation of **the department store** --- a new concept at the time. This area of the city soon became referred to as **Ladies' Mile**.

### Activity

Lead your students on a stroll up what used to be referred to as *Ladies Mile*. The purpose of your walk is to try to locate this past period in history on the streets of today's city.

*Ladies Mile* ran roughly from 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, at the top of Union Square over to Sixth Avenue with a few dips and curves. But we're suggesting you begin exploring a bit south of here. Pursue the following route and see what history you and your students discover:

- **Broadway and 9<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This was the location of A.T. Stewarts Department Store the very first department store.
- **785 Broadway at 10<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the building that housed Mathew Brady's studio where he took his famous daguerreotype of Abraham Lincoln.
- **801 Broadway at 11<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the original location of the James McCreery & Co. Dry Goods Store.
- **574 Sixth Avenue at 14<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the original home of the Knickerbocker Jewelry Company.

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- **Sixth Avenue at 18<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This is the original site of the Siegel-Cooper Dry Goods Store. You'll find the B. Altman Building close by as well.
- **881-887 Broadway at 19<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This was the site of the Arnold Constable Building.
- **889-891 Broadway at 19<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the original home of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, a leading silversmith of the time.
- **901 Broadway at 20<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This is the original location of the Lord and Taylor Store.
- **28 East 20<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This is the birthplace of President Theodore Roosevelt.
- **200 Fifth Avenue at West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street** --- This is above *Ladies' Mile* but we thought you would enjoy seeing the Sidewalk Clock at this location.

As your students stroll the area, have them make the following observations:

Look for large windows, especially on the second floor that were intended to allow passengers of the elevated train to see into the shops.

Look for mansard roofs that were intended to grab the attention of the ladies strolling by.

Look for elaborate cornice work on the outside of the buildings intended to attract the attention of ladies strolling by or the attention of riders on the EI.

Look for cast-iron facades and balconies on the buildings which were very popular in the day.

Look for limestone, granite and red brick.

For each site your students discover, have them consider and discuss the following:

Whether the building on the site today is historic and of the *Ladies' Mile* period or contemporary.

The current use (s) of the original building.

The current use (s) of the new building erected on this spot.

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Noting the character of the neighborhood, which fits the character better brownstones or tower buildings?

What kind of building would they erect on these streets today?

Have your students photograph all the buildings they like along *Ladies' Mile*.

#### **When You Return to the Classroom:**

- Create a gallery of *Ladies' Mile* photographs.
- Have your students research what the ladies shopping along *Ladies' Mile* were actually purchasing.
- Have your students research the development of the shopping areas in their home community.
- Have your students research dress patterns from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Purchase a pattern and have **every student** sew an apron.
- Have students research daguerreotypes.

#### **Materials Needed in New York City**

Maps of the City of New York  
Cameras

#### **Good Website About Department Stores and Ladies' Mile**

1. <http://www.departmentstorehistory.net/disc.htm> --- This site is a blog about the history of department stores all over the country. It's fascinating reading.
2. <http://www.columbia.edu/~ktj1/NYC/pics/wanamakers.jpg> --- This is an historic photograph of Wanamaker's Department Store in New York City.
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/html/newsletter/may2006.html> --- This is part of the New York City Government site. It has a good list of books and articles about the history of the department store in the city.
4. <http://www.opuspublishing.com/nycguide/stores/> --- This is the site for Opus Publishing. Here you can find information about some of New York's earliest department stores.
5. <http://www.oldandsold.com/articles14/new-york-34.shtml> --- This is an article about New York's early department stores that was originally published in 1921. It has an incredible amount of information however it does have some slight discrepancies with other information.
6. <http://www.placematters.net/flash/home.htm> --- This is an interesting site with information about many of New York's buildings.

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## Seeing the Buildings You Drew

This activity is a follow-up to the **Draw This Building** activity presented for completion prior to your class' visit to New York City. The purpose of both activities is to help students improve their visual literacy and to help them turn words into visions. The activities also provide students with some information about the early architecture in New York City. The New York City end of the activity gives students the opportunity to study the city's built environment up close and evaluate how accurately they were able to turn words into a vision on paper.

### Activity

Have your students visit the following three New York City Addresses:

1. 3350 Fifth Avenue
2. 405 Lexington Avenue
3. Broadway and Fifth Avenue at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street

These are the three buildings which they were asked to draw from descriptions you read to them before coming to New York City.

At each location have your students compare their renderings with each actual building. Discuss the differences.

Make sure you photograph each of the three building so you can display them when you return to your classroom.

Ask your students to each give you three (3) words that describe each of the three (3) buildings before them.

Ask your students to describe what each of these three buildings tells them about the surrounding neighborhood.

At each of the addresses have students look around them and choose a building to describe. Select a few students to present their description of one of these surrounding buildings. Have the remaining students point out the buildings being described.

### When You Return to the Classroom

Have your students research each of the three buildings for:

- It's history.
- How it was built.

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- What it's made of.
- Why it was built here.
- How much it cost to build.

### **Materials Needed**

Student drawings of the three buildings (completed at school)  
Cameras