



New York City Streetscapes

New York is unquestionably one of the most vibrant cities in the world. Its streets are teeming with colors, sounds, aromas and ideas from different cultures. It is a collection of different ideas and experiences. This activity introduces students to some of these experiences. It requires students to attend to everything in the Empire State Building's neighborhood. Students will practice using their visual literacy skills to read the built environment.

Activity #1

Assign each of the following New York City streets to a team of students. All are neighbors of the Empire State Building. Have each team photograph/sketch/write about the current street scenes (streetscapes) they find on these streets:

7th Avenue between West 32nd and West 35th Streets

West 34th Street between 7th Avenue and 5th Avenue

West 33rd Street between 7th Avenue and 5th Avenue

5th Avenue between West 32nd and West 35th Streets

Encourage students to include **everything** in their streetscapes. Have them explore their assigned blocks recording what they see.

Remind students they will be recording/describing/documenting a moment in history --- the history of Manhattan in New York City, in New York State in the United States of American in the year -----
????

After students have completed the assigned task, discuss what they captured with their drawing, their photograph or their words. What was the story they wanted to tell about the city? Discuss what they chose to leave out. Discuss what they missed. What part of the city's story is missing?

When you return to the classroom display your students' work.

Have your class watch selected scenes from *West Side Story* to note the streetscapes chosen for this movie. Have students look for anything they missed when they explored the city.



Activity #2 – Alternative Activity

Divide students into small teams. Each team should choose **just one thing** found on a Manhattan street on which to focus/ document/describe --- **just this one thing** as they see it. A team might focus on:

- the pattern of the streets
- the traffic flow
- all the shops found there
- the decoration seen on buildings
- the pattern of shadows and sunshine
- the signs in the windows
- the people

(It's best if you generate your own list of things on which to focus, based on student interest and previous lessons).

Remind students they will be recording/describing/documenting a moment in history --- the history of Manhattan in New York City, in New York State in the United States of American in the year -----
????

Assign students a city block (as in Activity #1) and have them explore this assigned block recording (via writing, drawing or photographing) what they see and hear in their chosen category.

After students have completed the assigned task, discuss what they captured with their drawing, their photographs or their words. What was the story they wanted to tell about the city? Discuss what they chose to leave out. Discuss what they missed. What part of the city's story is missing? If they told the story of the patterns of the built environment, did that mean they missed the story of the people who used these patterns? If they told the story of the shops found in the neighborhood, did that mean they missed the story of the patterns of use inside these shops?

When you return to your classroom lead your students in a discussion about the streetscapes they saw and captured:

- Did they like the architecture on their assigned street?
- How did they capture the city aromas they discovered?
- Did they find lots of colors or few colors?
- What did the signs on the street look like? What did these signs direct people to do or not to do?

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Did the size and shape of the buildings they found make them feel small or big?
What were the people in the neighborhood doing?
How did they capture the city sounds they heard?
Did they like the patterns of the city?
How did life in the neighborhood compare to life in their community?
What did they not see on their assigned city street?
What they would change about the street they explored?

Materials Needed:

Sketching supplies
Cameras
New York City Maps
Compasses (not required)
Method of displaying student work
West Side Story Video



Hunt for Neighborhood Treasures

This is an old-fashioned scavenger hunt through the Empire State Building's neighborhood. By exploring this neighborhood students will use their visual literacy skills to learn about New York's history, its built environment, its people and their culture.

Activity

This scavenger hunt will send your students in search of all kinds of New York treasures. Your route for the hunt runs through the Empire State Building's neighborhood. It will lead your students from the Empire State Building to Penn Station. It will take them from West 31st Street all the way over to West 34th Street and from 5th Avenue to 7th Avenue. In other words it will take your students in a big rectangle around the Empire State Building.

There is no order to the hunt but it should begin at the entrance to the Empire State Building on 5th Avenue. Have your students read the scavenger hunt first then use a map to plan their exact route. This planning is half the fun of it all!

The items on the scavenger hunt are not related --- they do not lead students to a treasure or to one special place. You'll see that the items on the hunt appear in different forms --- rhymes, riddles, true/false questions, etc. Nothing is straight forward! And many things are not as they seem. Enjoy!

Your Empire State Building Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt

Starting at the Empire State Building On 5th Avenue (between West 34th Street and West 31st Street)

1. Find out which is on the street signs *Fifth* or *5th*.
2. Find a school that undergraduates can not attend.
3. Quick! Was the door you used to exit the Empire State Building
Automatic?
Revolving?
Just a plain old open/shut door?
4. Name the establishments on each of the four (4) corners of 5th Avenue and West 33rd Street.

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One of the buildings on this corner has beautiful arched windows. On which corner is this building --- South East? South West? North East? North West?

5. The movie, *The Godfather* featured a shop located at 314 5th Avenue, near West 32nd Street. This shop specialized in one of the following items:

- Cigars
- Leather goods
- Hats
- Trains
- Bagels

Visit the address (most recently a pizza restaurant) and find the name of the shop. Then tell us which of the above items was its specialty.

On West 34th (between 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue)

1. From one of the following corners you can see a yellow and white place to live:

- 5th & 34th
- 6th & 34rd
- 7th & 34th

Find out which corner it is and when you've located the building, draw it right here so we'll know you have the correct building:

2. There's a really weird building at 38 West 34th Street. Which of the following is the best description for this building:

- All glass, very tall and wavy
- Low, brown, and sad-looking
- Green and white with elegant columns

3. Look hard and think hard and locate --- *A geometric shape that will Herald your arrival.*

4. Although you can't see it or hear it yet, there is a parade on its way and it will end right here in the neighborhood. Find the famous building that's the ending point for the parade and tell us exactly where the parade ends.

(Check their basement for some great photos and memorabilia of foregone parades.)

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5. You should feel safe on 34th Street when you find the six (6) women guarding the door to this store. What is the store and what's its address? And now, describe the six women ----
6. Hotel McAlpin used to stand at 50 West 34th Street. It was the largest hotel in the city when it was built in 1913 and it had a *silent floor* for the nocturnal. Find out what's on this site today.

Wonder if they still have that *silent floor*? Why not ask and find out?

7. Find A.S. Beck.

On 7th Avenue (between West 31st Street and West 34th Street)

1. There is a lovely 46 story, Art Deco building close to the intersection of 7th Avenue and West 34th Street that was built in 1929. Here's the name of this building ---

Lnnseo Wtreo

Sorry! We forgot to mention that the name of the building is scrambled. Unscramble this name, find the building and give us the address.

Now tell us how you might guess that this building was built between 1916 and 1961.

2. Find out what used to occupy the building on the corner of West 34th and 7th Avenue, where Citibank is today. **Just read the past and you'll know.**
3. There are two buildings on 7th Avenue that are named for a state located on the East Coast. What are these buildings?

Which building is older?

4. 7th Avenue True/False
 - You can not see the entire Empire State Building from 7th Avenue.
 - 7th Avenue is a one-way street.
 - 7th Avenue is also called The Avenue of States.
 - 7th Avenue has a train terminal that services up to a thousand passengers every 90 seconds.
 - Taxi cabs are not allowed on 7th Avenue.

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On West 33rd Street (between 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue)

1. Find *Mr. Greeley* and tell us why he's here.
2. The original *Gimble's Department Store* (arch rival of Macy's Department Store ---- "Does Macy's tell Gimbel's?") is on this walk. Tell us where it used to be --- for it is no more. Hint: You'll be 100% correct if you look to the corners. But be careful that you don't get malled!
3. Find out what the hotel on the corner of 7th Avenue and West 33rd Street has to do with the Big Band Era in US history.

On West 31st Street (between 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue)

1. As you stroll down West 31st Street toward 7th Avenue, look for a lovely French mansard roof high above you. It tops a former grand hotel from the late 1890's. We want to know what occupies this grand hotel today.
2. Solve the following rhyme about a site on West 31st Street and tell us what's on this site:

6x4 is 24
There's a hook and ladder behind the door
9divided by 3 = 3 by Division
Hurry up, make your decision.
3. Go to St. Francis House between 6th Avenue and 7th Avenue. Stand on the steps facing the street. Then, look up --- count the water tanks you see from here on New York's roofs. How many do you see? Are you sure? Look again! You may be VERY surprised!

End of Your Scavenger Hunt

Discuss the results of your scavenge hunt as a group.

After your New York visit, when your class returns to the classroom, have students create a walking tour of their school neighborhood.



Materials Needed

- Map of Manhattan
- Copies of the scavenger hunt
- Pencils for recording answers
- Cameras



Two Looking Challenges

This is a jam-packed activity that requires students to use their visual literacy skills to attend to New York City's built environment. Students will discover some of the history of the Empire State Building, some unique features of a New York neighborhood and gather some information about life in the 1930's.

Activity

Here are two challenges to find out how well your students pay attention to the sights around them. The first challenge takes place in the lobby of the Empire State Building. The second challenge takes place on 34th Street in the Empire State Building's neighborhood.

****Please note that it is not appropriate or fair to other visitors, to have a large group explore the lobby of this highly-visited building. We strongly suggest that you divide your students into small groups to complete this challenge!**

Looking Challenge #1

We challenge your students to find the following in the lobby of the Empire State Building:

- the latitude and longitude of the Empire State Building
- a replica of the Empire State Building itself
- a tribute to the metalworkers who worked on building the Empire State Building
- a tribute to masons who worked on building the Empire State Building
- a tribute to the carpenters who worked on building the Empire State Building
- A pyramid
- Zigzags under foot
- A symbol of the United States
- An elevator that's not plain!

Discuss with your students what they found and what purpose they think each item serves. Why was it placed in the lobby of the Empire State Building?



Looking Challenge #2

(these are harder than Challenge #1)

We challenge your students to find the following outside on 34th Street --- in the Empire State Building's neighborhood:

- A small brown building that looks very out of place
- A famous parade
- At least one balcony
- A rosette
- A building with a number for it's name
- A building with a real name
- Ladies protecting a door.
- A building that can tell time
- A square that will Herald your arrival

Materials Needed

Printed version of the challenges

Street maps of New York City



Next Station, Bleeker Street

See Student Worksheet G

The purpose of this activity is to have students focus on New York City's Subway system to get a beginning understand of how transportation systems affect a city's development and the lifestyle of its residents. Students will be asked to do some first-hand research while in the city based on some assumptions about the problems associated with creating an underground transportation system. They may also explore the present day system taking a look at the art work placed there and how it relates to the activity and energy of the city.

Background

By the middle of the 19th century overpopulation in New York was a severe problem. The influx of blacks from the South and immigrants from Europe had created a density of living in lower Manhattan that was unimaginable. Living conditions were deplorable.

But as the century drew to a close, things began to change. New York experienced a grand movement beyond its northern city limits. On what is now the Upper West Side, William Earle Dodge Stokes built the Ansonia Hotel, a great Beaux Arts style building adorned with ornate scrolls, brackets, balconies, and cornices. It was magnificent. And it was just the beginning. Other builders followed suite.

Edward Clark, head of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, built a row of 27 private homes and invested \$1 million in his family hotel at Central Park West and 72nd Street (This hotel later became known as the Dakota). Every apartment in this hotel was rented by the day it opened.

Not far behind, at the beginning of the 20th century the "subway", a new, underground transportation system was in the making and it would change where and how people lived. Now people had the ability to access parts of the island that had been accessible only to the wealthy. Private homes were replaced by enormous apartment buildings, especially near the new subway stops. Broadway became a commercial thoroughfare. Offices and banks sprang up everywhere. New Yorkers moved northward.

Shortly after this the subway would carry New Yorkers into the outer boroughs, off the island of Manhattan. The city would never be the same.



Activity #1 Creating A Subway

After or before a day of exploring in New York City have students think about the city's subway system. It's simple, right? You dig a hole, lay some track, buy some trains, hire staff and suddenly you have a subway! Wrong! Begin a discussion with your students about the variables they think would be involved in creating a subway system.

Here are a few of the variable that might be involved:

- Where should the system be?
- Who needs it and why? And When?
- Who will pay for the system?
- What will be done to keep disruption to city life at a minimum while the system is being created?
- What will the fare be? How do you go about deciding this?
- Are there problems with the ground underneath the city that will affect the creation of the system? If so, what are they?
- What size trains do we need/can we use?
- What will riders want to have in the stations?
- How do we construct the system to allow for expansion in the future?
- What are the safety issues that should be considered?
- What do we want the stations to look like?

After a general discussion divide students into Observation Teams based on the variables that were discussed. These teams should be of your choosing but might be such as the following:

- Observation Team #1 --- Subway Location
- Observation Team #2 --- Subway Station Function
- Observation Team #3 --- Subway Aesthetics
- Observation Team #4 --- Trains

Have each team summarize the variables discussed that relate to the topic they have been assigned.

Plan an excursion for the very next day that involves riding the New York subway. Plan to spend some time in at least 5 different subway stations. At each station have the teams evaluate that station based on their topic/variables.

Compare observations at the end of the day.



Discuss what the section of the city around each station visited would be like if there were no subway stop there or nearby.

Materials Needed

- Paper and pencils for recording observations
- Cameras for recording observations
- New York Subway maps
- New York City maps

Activity #2 The Stories Told By Art in the Subway, A Challenge

Prepare students for a few hours exploring the art found inside the New York City Subway. Present each student with a map of the city's subway system and discuss how to read it. Begin by learning all there is to know about the legend. When you're ready to read the stops begin by finding the closest stop to your present location and branch out from there.

After students have a basic understanding of the subway system, introduce them to their task for the day --- **to complete a matching challenge all about the art in the New York City subways.**

Present students with the Student Worksheet: *Art In Transit Challenge* and explain their challenge:

Their challenge is to complete a three-way-match. They must match each of the artists presented on the worksheet with the artwork that he or she created for a New York City Subway Station. To do this they must visit each of the stations listed and find the artist's creation. Then they must select one of the descriptions provided for this work of art.

Last, but not least, they must give the work of art their own name for it.

The Student Worksheet: *Art in Transit Challenge* has a workspace for making these three-way-matches.

At the end of the day, have students compare their answers to the *Art in Transit Challenge*.

Have students give their opinion about the works they saw. Did they like them or not? Why or why not? What would they change about them --- the topic used, the materials used, the colors chosen? Would music have added anything?

You may have students who would like to create their own work for one of the stations visited. Ask for ideas.



Materials Needed

Copies of the New York Subway Map for each student
Student Worksheet: *Art in Transit Challenge*
Pencils
Cameras

Good Websites for Information About the New York City Subway

1. www.nycsubway.org/ --- This is the official site of the New York City Subway. It has a great collection of historical documents and photographs. It also has a list of all the artwork scattered throughout the subway system.
2. <http://www.mta.info/index.html> --- This is the Metropolitan Transit Authority's home page. It's a great site for viewing the art in the New York City subways.
3. <http://www.nycsubway.org/maps/historical.html> --- This is another link to the New York City subway. This one leads directly to their collection of historic NYC subway maps.
4. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/nyunderground/> --- This is a National Geographic site that gives information about lots of things under New York City.