



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.