



Suggested Activities to Complete While In New York and at the NY SKYRIDE

Activities with a Mathematics Focus

The New York Shape of Things

New York City Streetscapes (Includes walking tour)

* New York City As the Artists See It



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 ----
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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



New York City As the Artists See It

[See Student Worksheet I](#)

This activity focuses on the basic visual elements that are used to create everything in our environment. Students will be taught to identify these elements and learn that they are a different type of language used to communicate ideas. A mural created by Fine Art students at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) is used as the basis for this activity. It depicts New York City in a number of ways --- in a literal way, in a representational way and in an abstract way, all utilizing this "other" language. Students will be asked to apply this new language to the mural of New York City.

Activity

As your class is waiting for the NY SKYRIDE gather everyone around and study the mural carefully. Have students locate sections of the mural that:

- tell about the services people who live here receive
- show the geometry of city streets
- tell about a city of the past
- point to the future
- make the viewer want to know more
- present other messages

Have students discuss what it is about each section that delivers the message.

Is it ---
the colors
the shapes
the movement
the angles
the lines
the texture
the tone
the form
the volume?

Have each student photograph the section of the mural that he/she relates to best --- the section that makes him/her the most interested in New York City.



As your class is exploring the streets of Manhattan, ask them to look at the city in the different ways it was represented by the artists who painted the mural. **Look for color, line, shape, value or tone, texture, volume or form.** Have students document examples of these visual elements via photographs or drawing/sketching.

Discuss and compare the photographs of the mural with the photos students took on the streets. Help students create direct association between the two, showing them just how present these elements are, everyday, in all environments. This will enable them to understand how the mural interprets the city in areas that do not contain words or other literal explanations.

When you return to school, view the video of the FIT students creating the mural at the NY SKYRIDE (Included for your use). Talk to the students about how they would approach creating a mural now that they see the different methods of expressing their ideas. Give each student an 18X24 piece of paper and have him/her create a section of their community that will later be combined together with everyone's in the class to become their own mural. Encourage students to be VERY creative with their materials.

Hang the mural sections around the classroom or in a long hallway. The installation of these "pieces" to form the whole will become a part of the lesson. Consider the *Principles of Design* when combing the work --- Consider the balance, proportion, rhythm, emphasis and unity of the total mural. Look at the mural sections as a group and discuss how they should be arranged. What areas are successful or visually (aesthetically) pleasing? Resolve, rearrange or make adjustments to areas that don't seem to work together and discuss why.

Have students create a collection of the different ways cities are visually represented.

Materials Needed

Cameras

Photos: *Documenting the NY SKYRIDE Mural* --- photos and a video for later use in the classroom. **(See Student Worksheet I)**

18X24 paper for each student

An assortment of supplies that could include- markers, paint, paint brushes, palette knife, glue, scissors, colored yarn, construction paper, ruler, as each student wishes.

Access to the Internet or other research tools



Good Websites About Ways of Representing Cities

1. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html> --- This is a link to the Library of Congress's Map Collection.
2. <http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/usa.html> --- This is a collection of outline maps from Houghton Mifflin Publishers.
3. http://www.yourchildlearns.com/us_map.htm --- This site has some free maps for downloading.
4. http://www.oilpaintingsbuy.com/oilpainting_subcate_4_2.html --- This is a commercial site but it gives a good overview of the many different ways artists have described cities.



The New York Shape of Things

The purpose of this activity is to improve students' visual acuity for shapes in the built environment. They must first find some of the basic and most familiar shapes but then they are challenged to search for more advanced shapes and shapes combined with other shapes.

Activity

Below is a list of shapes that are found all over New York City. Find out how good your students are at recognizing them.

Have students find five (5) examples of these on New York City streets

- Squares
- Rectangles
- triangles

Have students find four (4) examples of these

- parabola
- parallelograms
- semi-circles
- cones

Have students find three (3) examples of these

- hexagons
- octagons
- trapezoids
- pentagons

Have students find two (2) examples of these

- triangular pyramids
- rectangular pyramids
- cylinders

Have students find two (2) example of each of these

- angles
- symmetry
- congruence
- tessellation

Have students photograph each shape they discover and note the address of their discovery.



Materials Needed

Paper and pencil for recording where students find the shapes
Cameras

Good Websites About Geometric Shapes

1. <http://www.mathleague.com/help/geometry/polygons.htm> --- This is a great site that has examples of lots of geometric shapes.
2. <http://www.puzzles.com/PuzzlePlayground/Stomachion/Stomachion.htm> --- You can find a Stomachion at this site.
3. <http://artchive.com/artchive/P/picasso.html> --- This site provides a good biography of Picasso and an explanation of Cubism.