

Local History Detectives

Program Overview

Grade Level: Fourth and Fifth

Focus: Local neighborhood history, including a case study of the past and present of a specific location

Sessions: Three, including one introductory classroom session, one neighborhood walk and outdoor sketching session, and one classroom session with final project.

Common Core Learning Standards:

- Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy RI.4.7)
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy SL.4.1)
- Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy SL.4.3)

Description: Students discover how their neighborhood has changed in the last one hundred years. Using *My Preservation Journal*, students investigate actual sites to determine the differences between “then” and “now.” What has been added? What can you no longer see? Students first use historic photographs to learn about a specific site – a building or intersection – then go on a walking tour to the same site and observe it in the present, noting the similarities and differences between yesterday and today. Finally, using their knowledge of the past and present, they will design and write about their own vision of the future for the particular site.

Goals:

- Students will gain knowledge about the history of the Upper West Side and its development.
- Using historic photos and a walking trip, students will see firsthand the change over time for one particular location.
- Students will use their knowledge of the past and present to create a vision of the future.
- Students will consider the importance of landmarks and what they mean for the future.

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Lesson 1: Historic Photos

Goal

Looking at historic images of the Upper West Side, students will discover how the neighborhood has evolved from countryside to cityscape via the construction of the American Museum of Natural History, the 9th Avenue elevated train, and the IRT subway.

Materials

- Whiteboard
- Marker
- Photos
 - o 1887 - View from the Dakota (72nd & CPW) looking north
 - o 1903 - Digging for the IRT subway at 80th & Broadway
 - o 1925 - View of AMNH and surrounds, paper copies
 - o Current Google Maps view of AMNH
- Worksheets: Before and after photos of intersection of West 72nd and Broadway (IRT Subway Station)
- Pencils, 1 per student

Space

Classroom Meeting Area and Classroom Tables

Procedure

- 1) Educator introduces herself and explains that we are going to look at historic images of the neighborhood to see how it has changed. Also talk about landmarks in general and the role of Landmark West!
- 2) Show mounted 1887 photo showing the first building constructed at AMNH. “Where do you think this is? What makes you say that?” Students will likely mention Central Park - seeing trees, construction, not too many buildings, etc. They also see the “El” tracks.
- 3) 1887 looks very different from today. It wasn’t until 1852 that the Upper West Side was considered to be a part of New York City. The land was mainly countryside and farmland, not many people lived here. What changed? First, the construction of the 9th Avenue El enabled more people to move to the UWS. Second, when the AMNH was built, people began to think of the UWS side as a good place to live because it was the home of such a respected cultural institution. A lot of brownstones were built to house families moving to the neighborhood. There was a population explosion (what does this mean?) as large numbers of people moved to the UWS and apartment buildings were being built.
- 4) Show image of subway construction. What is happening here? Students will often guess building the street, planting things, etc. It is the subway being built right in the middle of Broadway. Why would they need this new, more effective, transportation system? More people living in the neighborhood.
- 5) Show 1925 aerial shot. Because it is not enlarged, students should share a copy with *over, please*. Most will notice that the center building is AMNH. Ask what has changed since the first more buildings, taller buildings, AMNH expanded, paved streets. When do you think this picture is from? Many will guess 1960s era. It is from 1925 – we can see how much has changed so quickly!
- 6) Students go back to their seats. Distribute worksheets to see how one specific place in the neighborhood has changed. Look at the two pictures from the corner of 71st Street and Broadway. Follow the instructions on the page – circle the differences using one color of crayon/marker and circle the similarities with another contrasting color. Also write a few lines about what you see.
- 7) Allow 10-15 minutes then ask students to share what they noticed.

Evaluation

- How did students demonstrate understanding of the development of the UWS?
- Did they make relevant observations about the two “then and now” photographs?

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Lesson 2: “Then and Now” Neighborhood Walk

Goal

For students to use a primary document/photograph and their own in-person observations to do a then-and-now comparison of a particular site. Using a historic photo, they will notice what has changed and what has stayed the same from around 1900 to the current year.

Materials

- Then-and-Now Worksheets
- Clipboards, 1 per student
- Pencils, 1 per student

Space

Classroom Meeting Area and Immediate Neighborhood

Procedure

- 1) Before leaving for the neighborhood walk, gather together for a quick meeting. Review the Then-and-Now Worksheet, explaining that the photo on the top is an historic photo (dates differ on worksheets for different schools), and that we will be walking to the same exact spot to see what has changed since then. There is space on the worksheets both for written observations and for a sketch – we will be doing both.
- 2) Leave the school and walk to the pre-chosen spot, which should be within a few blocks.
- 3) Stay together as a class for a few minutes. Ask students what similarities/differences they notice. Point things out that they did not mention. Remain there for about 20 minutes for the students to sketch the present day street scene and write down their responses then walk back to school.
- 4) Return to the classroom. If time allows, have students share some of their observations. Explain that in the past two sessions we have talked about the past and the present – next time we will think about the future!

Evaluation

- Did students make relevant connections between the historic photograph and their live observations?
- Were they able to see what things were the same and what had changed?

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Lesson 3: Vision of the Future

Goal

For students to use their knowledge of the history of the Upper West Side, landmarks and historic preservation, as well as their experience from the previous session to think about their specific vision of the future for the site they investigated.

Materials

- Future Worksheet, 1 per student
- Pencils, 1 per student
- Completed Then and Now Worksheets

Space

Classroom Meeting Area and Classroom Tables

Procedure

- 1) Gather in the meeting area. Ask students to recall what they discovered on the walk last time. Briefly discuss the similarities and differences they noticed between “then” and “now” – buildings, transportation, people, etc.
- 2) Review landmarks and their meaning – those buildings which are landmarked are protected from change and/or demolition. Are those buildings then likely to remain in 100 years?
- 3) Ask for suggestions about what might be there in the future- more buildings, different transportation, etc. Point out that even though a lot has changed between 1900 and today, the location still looks relatively the same. They should not make their drawings too silly either (aliens, etc.). Be realistic and evidence based.
- 4) Send students back to their seats. Allow 20-30 minutes for drawing and writing. If time allows, have a class share.

Evaluation

- How did students incorporate their knowledge of the past and present into their vision of the future?
- Did their drawings/writings include landmarks or ideas of historic preservation?