

AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM GUIDE: WHAT CAN THE AUTHOR OF “A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS” TEACH US ABOUT CHELSEA?

Grades 2 and 3

Materials:

Period 1:

- Powerpoint presentation
- Subway map
- Copies of Chelsea buildings
- Drawing paper
- Crayons, pencils

Period 2:

- Planning worksheet #1
- Large paper (e.g., 11” X 17” for student-drawn map)

Period 3:

- Butcher paper
- Crayons/colored pencils
- Collage materials
- Scissors
- Glue or glue stick

Extension:

- Miscellaneous art materials for model-building
- Cardboard
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Crayons
- Markers
- Colored pencils

NOTE: These lessons may be supplemented with a visit to Chelsea for an architectural walking tour. A suggested walking tour can be found in Joyce Mendelsohn's book *Touring the Flatiron: Walks in Four Historic Neighborhoods* published in 1998 by the New York Landmarks Conservancy. ISBN # 9780964706125. If a walking tour is not feasible, you may still conduct these lessons from your classroom.

Lesson goals:

Students will:

- Learn that Chelsea is a neighborhood in Manhattan
- Learn that Chelsea is located on the west side, near the High Line
- Learn that the author of A Visit from St. Nicholas was named Clement Clarke Moore
- Learn that the Moore family owned land in Chelsea long ago
- Learn that Chelsea used to be the countryside (rural)
- Learn that Clarke Moore was the person who had city houses (row houses) built in Chelsea about 170 years ago
- Learn some architectural terms
 - Row house
 - Lintel
 - Sill
 - Cornice

Duration: 3 periods

Period 1—powerpoint presentation and students draw examples of Chelsea buildings.

Periods 2 and 3—planning worksheet #1 and students design their own development

Extension—Students build a model of their development. This may take 2 or more periods.

PERIOD 1: Ask students if they are familiar with the poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas.” Ask if any of the students can recite any of the lines. If possible, get a copy of the poem from the library and have a choral reading with the class, or download it here: http://books.google.com/books?id=KnAwqwivt_wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=a+visit+from+st.+nicholas&sig=ACfU3UIP4BsUtSXKnvoS-T73K6aliAjoag#PP1,M1

Explain that the author of the poem was named Clement Clarke Moore, and aside from writing “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” he had an important role in creating a neighborhood in New York City. Ask what a neighborhood is? Elicit that a neighborhood is a smaller section of a city. Ask students to name some of the places they might find in a neighborhood. (Answers include homes or apartment buildings, schools, stores, parks, places of worship, library, post office, police and fire, etc.) Ask students to name the neighborhood where they live, or the neighborhood where their school is located. Show the subway map. Remind the students that NYC is divided into five boroughs, and that the boroughs are further divided into hundreds of neighborhoods. Have a volunteer come up to the subway map to identify the location of your school. Ask if any students are familiar with a neighborhood called Chelsea. Explain that Chelsea is but one of hundreds of neighborhoods in NYC. Chelsea is where the High Line is. Have a student locate Chelsea on the subway map.

Set up the powerpoint presentation.

Slide 1: 473 – 465 West 21st Street (between 9th and 10th Avenues). Ask students to describe what they see. They may answer houses. Ask the students to describe the

houses. Do they look like they belong in the city or in the country? (City.) Why? (They are connected, there is no front yard, there is no space between the houses.) Introduce the term *row house*. Ask students if they have seen row houses in New York City. (Most will probably answer yes.) Explain that row houses are all connected to their neighbors, and that several of them are built at the same time. Tell students that these row houses are in Chelsea. How many families were supposed to live in each row house? (One.) Have students count the floors. You may talk about the building material, and introduce some architectural terms like stoop, sill (under the window) and lintel (the horizontal beam across the top of the window and door opening).

Slide 2: Cushman Row. Ask students to describe the slide. (These are also row houses.) These are in Chelsea as well. Ask students if they think there are lots of row houses in Chelsea. (Yes, there are.) Are these row houses different from the previous row houses? How so? How are they similar? Encourage the students to make comparisons.

Slide 3: St. Peter's Church. Ask students if this is a row house. (They will know it is a church.) Ask students if churches (or places of worship) are an important part of a neighborhood? (They are.) Make sure students know that places of worship can be churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples. Ask students how they think Chelsea became a neighborhood in New York, with row houses and places of worship? Explain that every neighborhood in NYC has a different history, and Chelsea has a very specific one.

Slide 4: Clement Clarke Moore, 1851. Ask students if they can guess who this is, based upon the discussions. It is Clement Clarke Moore, the author of "A Visit From St. Nicholas." Ask if this is a picture from today or long ago? (Long ago.) How can students tell? (Black and white photo, different clothes, different hairstyle.) Explain that in addition to writing the poem, Clement Clarke Moore was the person who helped make Chelsea look the way it does today. When he was alive, Chelsea was not a city neighborhood. It was still the countryside. There were farms and woods. Clement Clarke Moore decided to change that.

Slide 5: Chelsea House, c. 1850s. (West 23rd Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues) Ask students if this house looks like one we typically see in NYC? (No.) Elicit that this house looks like it belongs in the countryside, in a *rural* environment. Tell students that this house is also in Chelsea. Do you think it's the kind of house we can find in Chelsea today? (No.) Why not? (It looks like a country house, and Chelsea is a city neighborhood.) Elicit that this is a very old photograph (hence the poor quality). Ask students who might have lived here. Explain that this was the *estate* of the Moore family. They owned a lot of land and this was their house. In the 1830s (about 180 years ago), New York City was growing larger. Clement Clarke Moore decided that his family's land should change into a part of New York City. How would he make that change? (Elicit that new houses would be built, and that the countryside would disappear.) Explain that Clement Clarke Moore donated land for the St. Peter's Church and some other buildings. And he worked with architects to design the new houses that would become the neighborhood of Chelsea.

Explain that Clarke Moore wanted this new neighborhood to be *residential*. Explain the term residential. Explain that Clarke Moore made rules to make sure that the neighborhood would be built the way he wanted. There were no stores or stables allowed. Why do students think Clarke Moore wanted those rules? Elicit that stores and stables meant traffic and noise. He wanted his neighborhood to be very quiet and pleasant. (Make sure students know what a stable is, and make the correlation between stables and garages.)

Tell students that they are going to create an album about Chelsea. Distribute copies of Chelsea buildings (maybe one or two different images per table grouping). Distribute drawing paper. Students copy building. When finished, join students' drawings together into a Chelsea booklet.

DESIGN A RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

PERIODS 2 AND 3:

Tell students that they will work in groups (or pairs) to design a neighborhood of their own. Discuss that when Clement Clarke Moore created Chelsea, he made a set of rules to ensure the quality and design of the neighborhood. Buildings were not allowed to be too tall, and certain types of buildings were not allowed. What rules will they come up with? Explain that they will imagine that they will be the ones to design Chelsea, instead of Clement Clarke Moore.

Distribute the planning worksheet #1 and have students work through it. After students answer the questions, they may work together to devise a map and drawings. If desired, students may build a model of their planned community. This drawing should be done as a map view, i.e., a bird's-eye view.

PERIOD 3: Using butcher paper, students draw one block of their development. They may use collage materials. Each group draws one block. When the project is finished, all the blocks can be put together to make one long cityscape. Discuss with the students that this view of their block should be head-on, i.e., *not* as a bird's-eye view.

EXTENSION:

Students may turn their 2D planned community into a 3D community. Using boxes, cardboard, and other art materials, students may create a model of their planned community. Don't forget to include the High Line!

PLANNING WORKSHEET #1

Grades 2 and 3

Group Member Names _____

Date _____

Instructions: Imagine that it is long ago and New York City is very small. Many parts of New York are farms or woods. You and your group members are in charge of building a new neighborhood for New York City. It is up to you to create it, just the way Clement Clarke Moore did. What will this new neighborhood look like?

1. Will the streets crisscross one another? _____
2. Will there be streets that run on the diagonal? _____
3. Will there be a combination of diagonal and crisscrossing streets? _____
4. Pick the types of buildings and places you would like to include: (you may choose as many as you like)
 - ☐ Houses
 - ☐ Stores
 - ☐ Places of worship
 - ☐ Schools
 - ☐ Other _____
5. Will the buildings (whether they are houses or stores) be the same height or different heights? _____
6. If all the buildings will be the same size, how tall will they be? _____
7. If the buildings will be different sizes, how tall will the tallest one be? How tall will the shortest one be? _____

8. Will the houses be meant for one family, two families, or more (like apartment houses)? _____
9. Will there be a front yard, back yard, or side yards? _____

10. Will only certain building materials be allowed? If so, what building materials? _____

11. Will there be a park or other special feature? _____

12. On a separate piece of paper, draw the map of your new neighborhood.

13. What will be the name of your new neighborhood?
