

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

Grades 4 and 5

Materials:

Period 1:

- PowerPoint presentation
- Subway map
- Planning worksheet #1
- Copies of Chelsea buildings

Period 2:

- Planning worksheet #2
- Large paper (e.g., 11” X 17” for student-drawn map)
- Copy of base 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 Clarke Moore was a member of a wealthy family
- Learn that the Moore family owned land in Chelsea dating back to 1750
- Learn what a real estate development is
- Learn that Chelsea used to be rural
- Learn that Clarke Moore developed Chelsea into a residential neighborhood about 170 years ago
- Learn about the character of Chelsea before it became a shipping center
- Learn how the High Line compliments the Chelsea neighborhood
- Learn some fundamentals of urban design
- Learn some architectural terms
 - Row house
 - Lintel
 - Sill
 - Cornice

Duration: 3 periods

Period 1—PowerPoint presentation and planning worksheet #1

Periods 2 and 3—Planning worksheet #2, 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. Perhaps some students know the poem in its entirety and would be willing to recite it. Ask students if they know the name of the poem’s author, or anything about him. 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#PPPI,M1

Explain that the author 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 students if they are familiar with Chelsea. (Many students may have been to Chelsea Piers.) If they are familiar with Chelsea, elicit their impressions and experiences of Chelsea. Have a student locate Chelsea on the subway map.

Ask what Chelsea looks like. Are there apartment buildings or smaller houses? (You may introduce the term ‘row house.’) How tall are the row houses? (Most are 4 stories high.) Do you think the row houses are very old, or new? (Many are in the neighborhood of 150 years old.) Does Chelsea look like a city neighborhood or the countryside? (A city neighborhood.) Does Chelsea look like the neighborhood you live in? How or how not? (Answers will vary.) Explain that Clement Clarke Moore belonged to a family that owned land in Chelsea long ago. In those

days, Chelsea was not a city neighborhood yet. It was still the countryside. Say, “We are going to learn how Clement Clarke Moore changed that.”

If the students are unfamiliar with Chelsea, explain that they are going to learn about this neighborhood and perhaps visit it.

Set up the PowerPoint presentation.

Slide 1: Chelsea House, c. 1850s (West 23rd Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues). Although the quality is a bit fuzzy, students should be able to make out the image. Ask students to share their impression of the image. What is it? (A house.) Does it look like many houses we see in NYC today? (No.) How is it different? (Its size, the fact that there appears to be a great deal of land surrounding the house, it is freestanding.) Ask if most houses or apartment buildings in NYC today have space in front of them, and to the sides of them? (Usually not.) Ask if this house looks like it belongs in a city environment? (No.) Elicit that it is a country house. Ask if the family that owned this house might have had a lot of money? (Probably.) How can they tell? (It is an extremely large house.) Students might also observe that the image is old. How can they tell that the photo is old? (It is in black and white, the quality is poor.) Explore the fact that when the picture was taken, it doesn’t mean that the world was black and white—only that the film was black and white. Explain that this picture was taken about 150 years ago. Tell the students that this house is called “Chelsea House,” and it belonged to the Clarke Moore family. It was built 231 years ago. The Clarke Moore family owned an estate (a large piece of land) in the part of Manhattan that would become Chelsea. Refer back to the subway map. Have students identify their school’s location on the subway map. Ask students if they think Chelsea House still stands? (Answers will vary.)

Slide 2: Clement Clarke Moore, 1851.

Ask students if they can guess who this is, based upon the discussions. It is Clement Clarke Moore, a member of the Clarke Moore family. Tell the students that he was born in Chelsea House in 1779 and grew up there. After he got married in 1813, he inherited part of the family land, the southern part. He decided that he would develop this land. Explore the meaning of the word develop, and ask the students if they are familiar with any developers of today. (Most are probably aware of Donald Trump.) Explain that the idea of developing land is not new! Clement Clarke Moore developed his land (reiterate that it was vacant) between the 1830s and the 1850s. He wrote “A Visit from St. Nicholas” for his children in 1822, and he died in 1863.

Slide 3: 473 – 465 West 21st Street (between 9th and 10th Avenues).

What did Clement Clarke Moore decide to do with his land? Explain that in those days, New York City was much smaller than it is today. Refer to the subway map and show the class that long ago, New York City was only located downtown. Everywhere else was pretty much the countryside or farmland. Explain that he wanted to turn it into a *residential* community. Explore the meaning of this word. He thought New York City would grow bigger with more people, so he wanted to create a neighborhood for people to live in. Ask students to describe the houses they see in the picture. Are they similar to one another? How so? Are they similar in size? In design? In color? In materials? .) Introduce the term *row house*. Explain that the houses Clarke Moore built were row houses. What does this mean? Can students understand

what a row house is by looking at the picture? (It is connected to its neighbors on either side, and the houses are lined up in a row.) Explain that usually, many row houses are built together at the same time. This is why they can be very similar to one another. How many houses can the students count in this row? (There are five in the picture.) Encourage the students to explore the similarities in the row houses. Explain that Clarke Moore wanted to make sure that the neighborhood he built would look a certain way, so he came up with different rules. Stores weren't allowed. Alleys weren't allowed. Stables weren't allowed. Ask, "why would anybody want to build stables at all?" Make sure students understand that in those days people got around via horse and carriage. Why might Clarke Moore have wanted to ban those things? (Answers will vary, but students should understand that those elements were perceived as undesirable.)

Slide 4: 471 West 21st Street.

(Part of the row from the previous slide.) Tell the students that the row house has different parts that have a name. For example, the *lintel* is a horizontal beam that goes across the top of an opening, like at the top of a window or a door. Call on students to come up and point out some of the lintels. What shape are they? (Rectangular.) Introduce the term *sill*. (A horizontal beam that goes across the bottom of an opening.) Have students come up and point out some of the sills. Introduce the term *cornice*. A cornice is an element that extends across the width of the building at the roofline, and it protrudes a bit. Have a student come up to the picture to identify the cornice. What material is this row house made of? (Brick and brownstone.) Explain that using certain materials was part of Clarke Moore's rules.

Slide 5: 416 West 20th Street.

Ask if this is a row house. (It is.) Does it look similar to the row house we saw before? (Yes, it is similar.) But does it have differences as well? (Yes.) Explore some of the differences. Tell the students that this row house was part of the ones that Clarke Moore built.

Slide 6: 348 – 358 West 20th Street.

Ask students to think of describing words that tell about the houses that Clarke Moore built. (Answers will vary.) He wanted his neighborhood to be elegant, fancy, and to appeal to very wealthy families. Do the students think he accomplished his goal? In actuality, Chelsea did not catch on with the wealthier classes because it was too far west. It became popular with the upper-middle class.

Slide 7: Plaque, 420 West 23rd Street, site of Chelsea House.

Have a student read the plaque. In addition to building many row houses, what other buildings was Clement Clarke Moore responsible for? (St. Peter's Church, and the General Theological Seminary, in the sense that he donated the land for these structures.) Remind students that at the beginning of the lesson, they speculated on whether Chelsea House still stood. Tell them that they are about to learn the answer.

Slide 8: 420 West 23rd Street, site of Chelsea House.

Explain that this is the site of Chelsea House. Did Chelsea House survive? (No.) Would people passing by have any idea that there was once a mansion on this site? (No, unless they stop to read the plaque.) Ask, "Has Chelsea changed since Clement Clarke Moore's day?" (Yes and no.)

Explore the idea that the houses he developed make up a good portion of homes we can see in Chelsea, although his family's home is no longer there, and Chelsea's rural character is gone.

Tell students that they are going to learn more about Clement Clarke Moore's design for Chelsea. Divide the class into groups. Give each group copies of the images of other blocks within Chelsea for which Clarke Moore was responsible. Have the students working groups to do the planning worksheet. Afterwards, students share their observations. Encourage students to understand the impact of the similarity in style, height, and materials had on Chelsea as a planned community.

DESIGN A RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

PERIOD 2:

Tell students that they will work in groups (or pairs) to design a residential development of their own. Discuss that when Clement Clarke Moore developed Chelsea, he created 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 #2 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.

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.

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 4 and 5

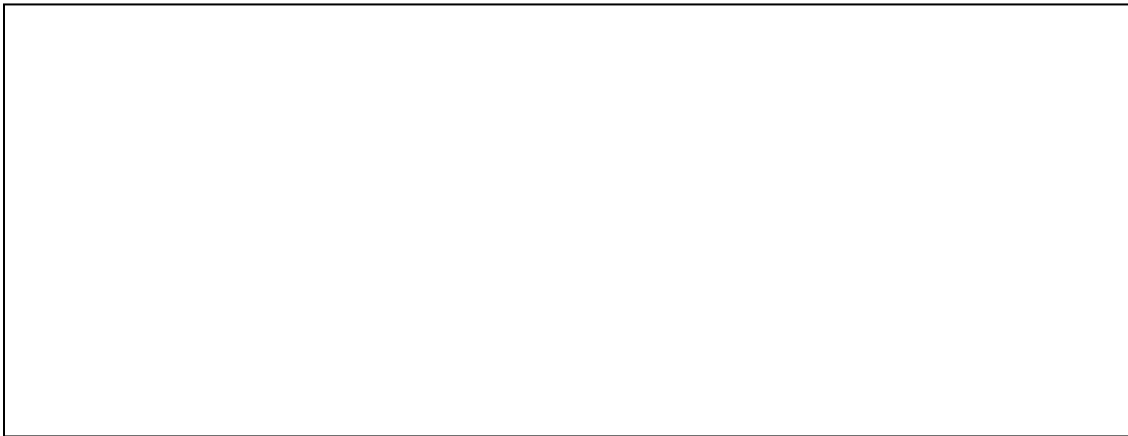
Group Member Names _____

Date _____

Instructions: Look at the pictures of buildings in Chelsea. Clement Clarke Moore was involved in building these houses. Based on the pictures, answer the following questions.

1. Does your picture show row houses? _____
2. How many floors do the row houses have? _____
3. Do all the row houses have the same number of floors? _____
4. What colors are the row houses? _____
5. What materials can you see in the row house? _____

6. Draw the houses.



7. Do you think Clement Clarke Moore would recognize these row houses? Why or why not? _____

8. After Clement Clarke Moore's day, Chelsea changed when railroads and piers were built. Chelsea became the center of where goods were shipped. Do you think this change was good or bad for Chelsea? Why? _____

9. How do you think the High Line will change Chelsea as a public park? _____

10. What do you think Clement Clarke Moore would think of Chelsea today? _____

PLANNING WORKSHEET #2

Grades 4 and 5

Group Member Names _____

Date _____

Instructions: Imagine that it is long ago. You and your group members have inherited a large piece of land in Chelsea. Now it is up to you to develop it, just the way Clement Clarke Moore did. What will you do? Use the map to help you answer the questions.

11. Will you keep the current street layout (the *grid*)? _____
12. Will you add new streets, like alleys or driveways through the blocks that are already there? _____
13. If so, where will these new blocks be? _____
14. Will there be only houses, or a combination of houses, stores, and other types of buildings? _____
15. Will the buildings (whether they are houses or stores) be the same height or different heights? _____
16. If all the buildings will be the same size, how tall will they be? _____
17. If the buildings will be different sizes, how tall will the tallest one be? How tall will the shortest one be? _____

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

20. Will only certain building materials be allowed? If so, what building materials? _____
21. Will there be a park or other special feature? _____

22. On a separate piece of paper, draw the map of your new development.

23. What will be the name of your development? _____
