



*New York City and the Nation*  
From Seaport City to Metropolis, 1790-1898  
Spring Institute 2006

# Teacher-Generated Unit Outline Planning Early NYC

These unit outlines and sample lessons were produced in advisory groups during the seven-day institute.

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**From Seaport City to Metropolis, 1790-1898**  
Spring Institute 2006  
Teacher-Generated Units of Study

**Essential Question:** How do people change an environment?

**Topic:** Planning Early New York City

**Contents:**

- Unit Outline
- Sample Lesson
- Resources

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## **Essential Question:**

How do people change an environment?

<b>Focus Questions</b>	<b>Lesson/Activities</b>
<b>How did the settlement of newcomers change Manhattan?</b>	<b>1a. Map Skills 1b. New Amsterdam 1c. British New York 1d. Post-Revolutionary War 1e. Manhattan Grid Plan</b>
<b>How did the grid plan both change and shape New York City?</b>	<b>2a. Effect of the grid plan on Business 2b. Effect of the grid plan on Neighborhoods 2c. Effect of the grid plan on Transportation</b>

### **Culminating Project:**

Students will produce a series of transparent overlay **maps** which will document the changing landscape of Manhattan from the New Amsterdam settlement to the modern day.

**Lesson Title: The Manhattan Grid Plan (also known as the Commissioners' Plan of 1811)**

**Unit's Essential Question:** How do people change an environment?

**Focus Question:** How did the settlement of newcomers change Manhattan?

**Skills/Strategies:**

- Drawing maps and diagrams
- Analyzing maps
- Compare and contrast
- Drawing conclusions
- Making predictions
- Locating places within the local community
- Investigating how people depend on and modify the physical environment

**Materials:**

- Rulers
- Pencils, markers, crayons
- Poster-size blank map of New York City with only lower Manhattan inhabited; areas marked will be lower Manhattan, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 110<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway.

**Mini-lesson:**

Display a disorganized floor plan of a school. Discuss how complicated it would be to find your way around. Read aloud excerpt from Sideways Stories from the Wayside School by Louis Sachar.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What do you notice about this school?
- How would students get to the cafeteria if it was in a random location?
- Would you feel comfortable going to this school?

Display an accurate floor plan of the school. Children will analyze the two plans and compare.

- What is the difference?
- Why did the architect design the floor plan one way instead of the other?

Teacher: "Take a look at this map of New Amsterdam in 1660 on the overhead. Which map can you compare it to: the first school floor plan or the second. Why?" Discuss how landowners and developers wanted to expand the city with the goal of future economic development and prosperity.

Teacher: "By 1800 most people lived in lower Manhattan. The government saw that Manhattan was growing and the state legislature wanted to make a plan before people settled permanently. In 1807 they appointed three commissioners (Gouverneur Morris, Simeon De Witt, and John Rutherford) to lay out the streets, avenues, and public squares in the upper part of Manhattan."

**Independent Work Time:**

Teacher: “You are going to be the city planners of Manhattan in 1807. Today you are going to take this blank map and create your own plan for the development of the city. Lay out the streets, avenues, parks, and any geographic features that should belong in the city. Be sure to include a compass rose, scale, legend. Please do not include any buildings or homes.”

**Share/Assessment:**

Students will present maps, explain how they created their maps, and why they think their grid plan will work for the city. The class will discuss each map. Afterwards, the teacher will present the grid plan of 1811. The students will discuss the layout of the streets and avenues and will compare and contrast their projects to the plan.

## Resources

Boyer, M. Christine. Manhattan Manners: Architecture and Style, 1850-1900. NY: Rizzoli, 1985.  
Cohen, Paul and Robert T. Augustyn. Manhattan in Maps: 1527-1995. NY: Rizzoli, 1997.

- 1695 “Under English Rule”
- 1660 Costello Plan “New Amsterdam”
- 1797 “A New Accurate Plan”
- 1789 “Plan of the City of New York”
- 1807 “Plan of the City of New York”

Harris, Bill The History of New York City. NY, 1989. (Grid Plan Map)

Homberger, Eric and Alice Hudson (illustrator). The Historical Atlas of New York City. Owl Books, reprint: 1998.

### Student Literature:

Sachar, Louis. Sideways Stories From the Wayside School. NY: Harper Trophy, 2004.

Young, Karen Romano. Small Worlds: Maps and Mapmaking. NY: Scholastic Reference, 2002.

### Field Trips and Excursions:

Empire State Building: View the grid from the observation tower

Manhattan neighborhoods

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park, Panorama of New York City

### Websites:

1. Cornell University – Grid Plan of Manhattan:

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/Reps/DOCS/nyc1811.htm>

2. 1868 Grid Plan Map of Central Park:

<http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.bridgeandtunnelclub.com/bigmap/manhattan/centralpark/1868map/1868map.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.bridgeandtunnelclub.com/bigmap/manhattan/centralpark/1868map/&h=2672&w=732&sz=418&tbnid=8-U2ju8vCwIiRM:&tbnh=150&tbnw=41&hl=en&start=1&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmap%2Bof%2Bcentral%2Bpark%2B1868%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Den%26lr%3D%26safe%3Doff%26sa%3DG>

3. Google Earth: [www.earth.google.com](http://www.earth.google.com)

4. PBS Kids:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/goingplaces3/newyorkcity/highlights.html>

<http://pbskids.org/bigapplehistory/early/topic15.html>

### Other:

New York City MTA Subway map

Various contemporary NYC street and park maps