

## Lesson Plan 1

### Before the Grid – 18<sup>th</sup>-Century City



Colonial New York: The Ratzer Map, 1776 (Detail) [ [Link](#) ]



Randel Composite Map, (Detail) [ [Link](#) ]

### OVERVIEW

Students will analyze the print *McSpedon & Baker Five Points, 1827* to note how New York City life was depicted during the 19th century and to understand the impetus behind city planning.

### RESOURCES

#### Background information

Unplanned City: Five Points, 1827 [ [Link](#) ]

**Print** *Five Points*, 1827, Engraving after a painting by George Catlin, published in D.T. Valentine's Manual, 1855  
Museum of the City of New York, Print Archives, 97.227.3

**Text** Touring the Five Points: James D. McCabe, Writer, 1872

### STUDENT GOALS

- Students will understand the motivations behind developing a city-wide plan.
- Students will use a 19<sup>th</sup>-century image to explore the streets of Manhattan predating the grid.
- Students will be introduced to the concept of urban planning and explore how planning helps ensure that communities serve the needs of the people who live in them.

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Grade:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

BEFORE  
THE GRID

THE  
1811 PLAN

BUILDING  
THE GRID

19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY  
DEVELOPMENT

20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
– NOW

LIVING ON  
THE GRID

OTHER  
GRIDS

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#### KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

■ Adjective

■ Decay

■ Depiction

■ Environment

■ Wretched

#### DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

Print:



#### From Unplanned City: Five Points, 1827

*Five Points*, 1827 [ [Link](#) ]

Engraving after a painting by George Catlin, published in D.T. Valentine's Manual, 1855

Museum of the City of New York, Print Archives, 97.227.3

- How is city life depicted in this 19th-century image?
- What activities are taking place in the image?
- What might the challenges be for someone living in this environment?
- In the student's opinion, is this a positive or negative depiction of New York in the 19th-century?

#### RELATED COLLECTIONS PORTAL IMAGES



City History Club of New York.

*The Five Points, Seventy-five Years Ago*, ca. 1920. [ [Link](#) ]

Museum of the City of New York. X2011.34.1418



Endicott & Co.

*The Old Brewery at the Five Points N.Y.*, ca. 1852. [ [Link](#) ]

Museum of the City of New York.



Jacob A. (Jacob August) Riis

*Dens of Death*. 1872. [ [Link](#) ]

Museum of the City of New York. 90.13.4.35

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#### DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

##### Text:

*Just back of the City Hall, toward the East River, and within full sight of Broadway, is the terrible and wretched district known as the Five Points. ... The "Old Bowery" was everywhere recognized as the headquarters of crime in the metropolis... The narrow thoroughfare extending around it was known as "Murderers' Alley" and "The Den of Thieves." No respectable person ever ventured near it, and even the officers of the law avoided it except when their duty compelled them to enter it... Here the vilest and most poisonous compounds are sold as whiskey, gin, rum, and brandy. Some of these houses are brothels of the lowest description. The filth that is thrown into the street lies there and decays... As a natural consequence, the neighborhood is sickly and sometimes the infection amounts almost to a plague. Between 14th Street and the Bowery, half a million people are crowded into about 1/5 of the island of Manhattan. Within this section there are about 13,000 tenement houses, fully one-half of which are in bad condition, dirty, and unhealthy... Every room is crowded with people. Sometimes as many as a dozen are packed into a single apartment. Decency and morality fade away here. Drunkenness is the general rule.*

Touring the Five Points: James D. McCabe, Writer, 1872

- What are the problems the author warns of in the text? Underline the words that help you answer the question.
- How do the living conditions contribute to the problems?
- Is the text in agreement or disagreement with the activities depicted in the image?

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#### DOCUMENT BASED ACTIVITY

**Print** Unplanned City: Five Points, 1827 [ [Link](#) ]  
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 published in D.T. Valentine's Manual, 1855  
 Museum of the City of New York, Print Archives, 97.227.3

**Text** Touring the Five Points: James D. McCabe, Writer, 1872

Prior to revealing any background information, students will be shown the print and will write down one adjective that describes city life as depicted in the image. Examples might be “loud”, “busy”, “crowded.” Students will share their individual words noting what in the image inspired their choice. After explaining that the print was created with a specific viewpoint, read aloud or distribute the text for close reading (may be read in entirety or further excerpted according to grade level). Ask students to consider if the text is in agreement or disagreement with the image, citing specific examples of where the text correlates to the image or where it is in opposition. As a culminating activity, students will create a chart, listing on one side the “problems” depicted in the text and image, and the other side solutions that they come up with in small groups or in pairs. Students will come together to share the solutions they came up with.