

BEFORE
THE GRID

THE
1811 PLAN

BUILDING
THE GRID

19TH-CENTURY
DEVELOPMENT

20TH CENTURY
– NOW

LIVING ON
THE GRID

OTHER
GRIDS

Lesson Plan 4

19th-Century Development



A Panorama from Park Avenue and 94th Street, 1882–83 (Detail) [[Link](#)]

OVERVIEW

Students will analyze the print *The March of Modern Improvement* to debate the progress of the grid and resulting changes.

RESOURCES

The March of Improvement

Charles S. Reinhart, "The March of Modern Improvement—Destruction of Old Buildings in Upper New York." Wood engraving, printed in *Harper's Weekly*, October 28, 1871 [[Link](#)]
Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Harry Shaw Newman, 55.53.2

19th-Century Development [[Link](#)]

STUDENT GOALS

- Students will understand the connection between the street plan and change in the city's infrastructure, population, and culture of the city during the 19th-century.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

1st Grade:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

5th 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.

11th 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.

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KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

■ Allegorical ■ Improvement ■ Modern ■ Omnibus ■ Spectator ■ Speculator

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS



The March of Improvement

Charles S. Reinhart, "The March of Modern Improvement—Destruction of Old Buildings in Upper New York." Wood engraving, printed in *Harper's Weekly*, October 28, 1871 [[Link](#)]

Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Harry Shaw Newman, 55.53.2

- Locate the dates displayed within the image. What do the years represent?
- How is progress represented in the image?
- How does the image depict change over time?
- What types of activities are the people represented engaged in?
- How do the activities in the image support the title of the print?
- How do the buildings play a role in the image? What characteristics do they take on?

RELATED COLLECTIONS PORTAL IMAGES



First Reformed Episcopal Church, 55th Street and Madison Avenue. ca. [[Link](#)]
Museum of the City of New York. 1876 X2010.11.2486



Wurts Bros.
City view from East 55th Street and Madison Avenue looking northeast toward Queensboro Bridge.
Ca. 1932. [[Link](#)]
Museum of the City of New York. X2010.7.2.5122



Irving Underhill.
28 East 55 St. S.W. Cor. Madison Av. 1946. [[Link](#)]
Museum of the City of New York. F2013.128.16



Wurts Bros.
Lans Antiques. N.W. Cor. 55 St. and Madison Ave. New York City. 1919. [[Link](#)]
Museum of the City of New York. X2010.7.2.14624.

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19th-Century Development**DOCUMENT BASED ACTIVITY**
PORTRAYING CHANGE

Following the larger class discussion, create a list of characters depicted in the image, such as: speculator, landowner, land developer, omnibus driver, omnibus passenger, spectator, child.

Students will consider, using evidence from the image, which characters seem to be for or against the “march of improvement.” Each student will be assigned one of the characters and will write dialogue that represents the viewpoint discussed. On a clean sheet of paper students will write out, in a speech bubble, the dialogue the student imagines the character is saying. The bubbles will be hung on the wall surrounding the image using string to mark which character is connecting to what statement. As a final step students will arrange themselves in front of the classroom in the position of their characters. In a carefully orchestrated manner students will speak out loud the words they wrote, creating a vibrant tableaux of debate and discussion.