

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

## Lesson Plan 5

### 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Development



The Wall Street (Detail) [\[Link\]](#)

#### OVERVIEW

Students will compare and contrast three photographs, ranging from aerial to street views, to note how the grid developed the city's landscape.

#### RESOURCES

##### The Street Wall

Berenice Abbott, Seventh Avenue Looking North from 35th Street, 1935 [\[Link\]](#)  
Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, Federal Art Project, 43.131.1.67

##### Sidewalk Traffic

Berenice Abbott, Tempo of the City II, 1938. [\[Link\]](#) Gelatin silver print  
Museum of the City of New York. Gift of Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, Federal Art Project, 43.131.2.248

##### Housing Superblocks

Aerial View of Housing Superblocks on the Lower East Side, April 30, 1952. [\[Link\]](#)  
Gelatin silver print Museum of the City of New York, Prints and Photographs Collection, X2010.11.3841

##### Modern Reforms, 20<sup>th</sup> Century – Now [\[Link\]](#)

##### Living on the Grid [\[Link\]](#)

#### STUDENT GOALS

- Students will understand how the infrastructure of the grid affected daily use on its streets
- Students will be able to compare and contrast images to note differences and similarities
- Students will understand the difference in perspectives between aerial and street views

#### 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.

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### KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

- Aerial
- Impinging
- Congested
- Metropolis
- Emulsion
- Tempo
- Flux

### DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS



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### RELATED COLLECTIONS PORTAL IMAGES



Wurts Bros.  
Street light, 500 Fifth Avenue building in background. ca. 1939. [ [Link](#) ]  
Museum of the City of New York. X2010.7.1.17739.



Samuel H. (Samuel Herman) Gottscho.  
Columbus Circle from roof of Century Apartments. c. 1930-1933. [ [Link](#) ]  
Museum of the City of New York. 39.20.22.



Illustrated Postal Card Co.  
The Bowery, New York. 1906. [ [Link](#) ]  
Museum of the City. X2011.34.1167

- What are the perspectives depicted?
- How does each photograph suggest the “flux of activity”? What movements are taking place?
- In *Tempo of the City II*, how many different forms of transportation are included in the image? What types of activities are highlighted?
- Would you describe the scenes depicted as orderly or chaotic?
- How does the grid’s infrastructure determine movement above ground? Find examples in each photograph of how the grid regulates city life.
- What information do the photographs provide about the city? What are you left wondering?

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#### DOCUMENT ACTIVITY

In 1935, Berenice Abbott wrote, "To photograph New York City means to seek to catch in the sensitive and delicate photographic emulsion the spirit of the metropolis, while remaining true to its essential fact, its hurrying tempo, its congested streets, the past jostling the present."

Photographic Record of New York City submitted by Art Project, Works Division, Emergency Relief Bureau by Berenice Abbott, 1935

In *Outline for Photographing New York City*, 1936, Berenice Abbott posed the question, "How shall the two-dimensional print in black and white suggest the flux of activity of the metropolis, the interaction of human beings and solid architectural constructions, all impinging upon each other in time?"

This activity focuses students' attention on not only the grid, but also on the ways in which the planning, implementation, and inhabitation of the grid has been recorded via maps, prints, paintings, and photographs. The educator will lead a discussion comparing and contrasting the viewpoint and narrative in each image, noting the perspective, details, and contrast between the aerial and street views. Once students explore how each depiction adds to a general understanding of how the grid orients above-ground traffic, students will be tasked with taking three of their own photographs. Each photograph should be a commentary on how their own neighborhood is organized and should be an attempt to respond to variations of the above questions:

- What perspective does your photograph depict?
- How does your photograph depict "flux of activity"? What movements are taking place?
- Inspired by Berenice Abbott, photograph a street view that depicts the "tempo" of your neighborhood.
- Are the scenes depicted orderly or chaotic?
- How does the grid's infrastructure determine movement above ground? Find examples in each photograph of how the grid regulates city life.
- What information do the photographs provide about your community or neighborhood? What is left out?

The students' photographs should be printed and include written captions responding to the questions above. The photographs and captions can be hung and grouped either by neighborhood or by theme.