



NEW YORK CITY & THE NATION

A SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CONSORTIUM TO TEACH AMERICAN HISTORY

New York City Department of Education, Gotham Center for New York City History, City Lore, Brooklyn Historical Society, New-York Historical Society, Henry St. Settlement, Historic House Trust

Notes on New York City & the Nation

ELISE ABEGG

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL STUDIES, NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Renowned historians, talented partners, dedicated educators, rich resources: these are the pieces that make up the Teaching American History (TAH) professional development grants in New York City and make them so successful. As you may know, the Social Studies Department of the New York City Department of Education has been awarded two federal TAH grants in partnership with the Gotham Center for New York City History, City Lore, and several other prominent cultural/historical institutions. The TAH grants, supporting a program we call *New York City & the Nation*, have enabled us to bring high quality professional development to a number of teachers throughout the city in the form of intensive institutes, Saturday workshops, and in-school mentoring. After conducting a second successful Summer Institute in 2005, we launched the second year of our Gotham Fellows Program, which will grapple with the essential question, “How does understanding New York City history deepen our understanding of ourselves, our nation, and the world?”

We are thrilled to have a committed group of educators explore this question while discovering new and innovative strategies to engage students. This school year the Fellows are attending talks by some of the nation’s finest historians, participating in workshops conducted by educators from many of our city’s cultural institutions, and walking away from each session with lesson ideas, books, and other useful resources. In addition, Fellows are working in groups with a mentor to produce a unit of study connecting NYC history to the core social studies curriculum. This process will help teachers synthesize and reflect upon what they have learned throughout the course of the program. Fellows from our first year who rejoined us for the second round are getting additional training in professional development, and the opportunity to share their experience with colleagues in their schools and their regions. The Second Year Fellows are thus helping reach more teachers and creating greater sustainability for the program.

In addition to the Gotham Fellows, we will soon be recruiting a new cohort of teachers for our Spring Institute. See below for details about how to apply for this program, or visit www.nycenet.edu; you can also send e-mail to gothamed@gc.cuny.edu. Many regions throughout the city have also been awarded TAH grants, offering a greater number of opportunities for teachers to benefit from the TAH mission. I invite you to seek out these programs as well. Whether you participate in a citywide grant or one at the regional level, I look forward to hearing about your successes in the classroom.

The New York City & the Nation Spring Institute

SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2006 • MONDAY-FRIDAY, APRIL 17-21, 2006 • SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2006

New York City & the Nation: From Seaport City to Metropolis, 1790-1898 is a 40-hour institute during spring break and on two additional Saturdays. The institute will investigate New York City's growth and transformation from a bustling seaport city to a booming metropolis, examining the effects of the Erie Canal and westward expansion, extensions and restrictions of democracy, the advent of industrialization, and ongoing immigration on the city and the nation. *New York City & the Nation* draws its teaching team from the New York City Department of Education, The Gotham Center for New York City History, City Lore, the Historic House Trust, Henry Street Settlement, Brooklyn Historical Society, and The New-York Historical Society.

The institute includes:

- **Hands-On Workshops**, demonstrating how history can be brought to life in the classroom through informed teaching and engaging methodologies that follow New York City and New York State Learning Standards.
- **Teaching Methods**, incorporating local architecture, neighborhood walks, visual arts, drama, primary documents, oral history, historic sites, Internet use, and museum collections.
- **Scholar Presentations** by renowned historians Mike Wallace, Adina Back, Ed O'Donnell, and Craig Wilder.
- **Classroom Application** utilizing "Understanding by Design" to develop a standards-based unit outline connecting New York City History to American History.
- **Instructors** include historians, staff developers, folklorists, history educators, drama artists, and museum educators.

Check the job posting on the New York City Department of Education's Web site or e-mail gothamed@gc.cuny.edu for eligibility and additional information.

This is what teachers are saying about New York City & the Nation:

"So often social studies is an afterthought—or not even thought of at all. And to come here to this staff development and feel totally supported made an enormous difference. It planted a seed and revitalized me—it taught me that history is an empowering subject; ... if you're going to do good things in the classroom, you have to be supported and stimulated so you can bring that excitement back to the classroom."

"This is the type of staff development I've always dreamed of—supportive, not in a vacuum. Learning about New York history showed me that it's all here—the music, industrialization, jazz, and everything else."

"I think one of the things that was so impressive about this work was the care that the teachers had about what they were doing and the care that the organizers had in implementing what was going to happen. It affirmed my approach to things—I approach my projects like you're coming to my house for dinner and it has to be wonderful. I was constantly inspired to learn more and study more."

"Assessment, assessment, assessment: that's what the workshops with staff developer Maggie DeLuca taught me. What will the students know after you do all this? What are the goals and expectations? They made me think as a professional—you know what, I have to assess myself as well."

Comments recorded at New York City & the Nation's end-of-year celebration, June 2005.

Feature Lesson from the Gotham Fellows Program

Twenty teachers of seventh and eighth grade social studies from schools around the city joined *New York City & the Nation* as Gotham Fellows during 2004-05. We met once a month on Saturdays to explore twentieth century topics in New York City history that also revealed larger currents in American history. The essential question guiding our whole program was: How does understanding New York City history deepen our understanding of ourselves, our nation, and the world?

We spent the mornings with historians noted for their work in a particular area, and the afternoons in classroom application workshops led by our staff developer and cultural partners. In the workshops we tried out and analyzed classroom strategies that could be used to convey the morning's content as well as many other subjects. For the last session, in May 2005, we met at the Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS). Historian Joshua Freeman gave a talk on "The Social Democratic City, 1945-1975," and BHS educators guided us through a two-part workshop in using and making historical exhibits. We're pleased to share with you the workshop BHS developed.



"Students as Curators" Workshop at BHS, 2005

Students as Curators: Creating a Classroom Exhibition as a Teaching and Learning Strategy

ANDREA DELVALLE
BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY EDUCATOR

Workshop Background:

Our charge for the workshop was to model for the Fellows how to use historical exhibits to enrich student learning. The assigned content was Professor Freeman's talk on New York as a social democratic city, a topic we knew something about because Professor Freeman was an important consultant on our major exhibit *Brooklyn Works: 400 Years of Making a Living in Brooklyn*.

Professor Freeman's guiding questions for his talk were: What does our society owe every individual? How did New York City answer that question after World War Two? He focused on how New York City's path diverged from the rest of the nation's after WWII because here in New York we tried to put into practice the ideals expressed in President Roosevelt's extraordinary "Economic Bill of Rights," communicated to Congress and the nation in his January 1944 State of the Union Address. President Roosevelt equated individual freedom with economic security and independence, and claimed Americans should have the right to useful and remunerative jobs, decent homes, adequate medical care, and so on. As Professor Freeman told the Fellows during his lecture:

President Roosevelt was calling in effect for an extension of the New Deal through the creation of a new set of social and economic rights, which implied a new set of responsibilities for government. ... With some exceptions, such as the GI Bill, the nation decided to go in a different direction after the war, one that rejected the idea of a major expansion of the idea of a welfare state, of guaranteed, government-provided social benefits and protections that would go beyond those already provided by the New Deal or by individual states. In New York City, however, labor unions, reformers, mainstream politicians,

and various advocacy groups worked together to make New York City into a laboratory for a social urbanism committed to an expansive welfare state, racial equality, and popular access to culture and education—very much along the lines FDR was envisioning.

In the postwar years, New York City developed or expanded a set of social services on a scale far surpassing any other city in the country, including: a huge public hospital system; a huge and, for a long time, free municipal university; a public transit system with very low fares; public radio and television stations; even a quasi-public arts center to bring high culture to working class audiences—the City Center for Music and Drama, which was the umbrella for the New York City Opera and the New York City Ballet. Since many of your students may have grown up with the residue of this system, they may assume that such things as public transit or public hospitals are normal, but in fact they are exceptional.

To explain his account of New York City's choices and the larger social, cultural, and economic context, Professor Freeman touched on a number of topics that we drew upon for our afternoon workshop, such as housing, healthcare, the wartime and postwar industrial landscape, urbanization vs. suburbanization, and rural to urban migrations.

Joshua Freeman is Professor of History at Queens College and The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His field is U.S. Labor History. Two of his books particularly relevant to his lecture for the Gotham Fellows are: *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (The New Press, 2000) and *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (New Edition, Temple University Press, 2001). Professor Freeman is co-author of the textbook *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society* (Pantheon Books, 1992), and he is currently working on a history of the United States since 1945.

For an excerpt of FDR's speech, log onto:
<http://www.worldpolicy.org/globalrights/econrights/fdr-econbill.html>.

For a copy of Professor Freeman's lecture, log onto www.gothamed.org and follow the link to *New York City & the Nation*.

Workshop Write-Up: Two Sample Lessons

Our workshop is replicated here as two separate sample lessons to be used within the context of a broader unit of study. These methods can be easily adapted by teachers in grades 7-12 for use in the classroom. An excellent resource for designing a unit of study is www.nycsocialstudies.org.

LESSON ONE: EXHIBIT EXPLORATION THROUGH FIELD EXCURSIONS (90 MINUTES)

Exhibit tours (a type of field excursion) are an important step towards inquiry-based learning. For this workshop, teachers adopted the role of students on a guided tour of the exhibition *Brooklyn Works: 400 Years of Making a Living in Brooklyn*. Such field excursions can be used on their own or as preparation for creating classroom exhibits. In either case, exhibit exploration should have two pedagogical purposes: to acquire information that is important to your topic of study, and to analyze how practitioners in historical professions interpret their subjects (reflected in choices of content and display).

Focus Questions

1. How did the economic and social changes occurring during the Great Depression and World War Two alter the type of work done by New Yorkers after the war?
2. During this same period, what changes occurred in the work performed by women outside the home?
3. How did New Yorkers, individually and collectively, advocate for the principles expressed by President Roosevelt in his Economic Bill of Rights?

Learning Goals

Students will examine the post-1929 sections of the Brooklyn Works exhibit to glean answers to these questions. They also will analyze how the exhibit curators made interpretive choices as reflected in the selection and arrangement of materials, the style of narration and identity of narrators, and the form of display.

Pre-Trip Preparation

Call Brooklyn Historical Society at (718) 222-4111, ext. 222, to schedule your guided tour and to obtain a free copy of the Pre-/Post-Visit materials. Visit the Web site, www.brooklynhistory.org, for information about the programs offered. You can design your own experience through a self-guided tour or adapt the plan below.

Materials

- Pencils.
- Clipboards or notebooks for recording findings.
- Information sheet (questions listed below).
- Cameras and/or materials for sketching.

Student Activity

As preparation for the students' own exploration of the exhibit, the museum educator leads the whole group in a selective viewing of exhibit components pre-1929. The educator introduces the themes of the exhibit and guides students through a discussion about how exhibits are put together. This is also an opportunity for the classroom teacher to make connections to prior learning. The discussion clarifies major concepts and vocabulary that students will use in their subsequent examination.

As individuals or in small groups, students examine the post-1929 portion of the exhibit. Students are responsible for answering at least one of the focus questions, providing at least three responses based on evidence from the exhibit. Students also will comment on at least three curatorial choices. Depending on the grade level, students will be asked to explain how the selection of material or style of storytelling and display affected their experience (e.g., made them feel compassion for a historical character), or how these choices revealed the point of view of the exhibit's creators.

Assessment

Informal observation during student activity to determine student understanding. In addition, response sheets may be evaluated.

Follow-up/Extension

1. Curate an exhibit (see lesson below).
2. Literacy Connection: Have students write a thank-you note to the BHS educator who led their tour. They might mention in the letter one thing they learned on the tour, something they especially enjoyed, and any questions the experience raised for them. Decoding primary source documents and creating labels for their exhibits, in the activity below, also give an opportunity to reinforce the literacy skills of comprehension and synthesis.

continued

LESSON TWO: CREATING CLASSROOM EXHIBITS (90 MINUTES)

Using primary source documents from the Brooklyn Historical Society or other sources, students can adopt the role of museum curator. Creating a classroom exhibit is an excellent way for students to construct a visual representation of the interpretation of history.

Assemble photocopies of primary sources from the mid-twentieth century. This body of material is now your classroom's "collection." Just as historians and curators must make decisions about what to include in an exhibit, students must also analyze their collection of historical documents to construct a historical narrative. Students may wish to organize their information chronologically or thematically. By creating their own exhibits students will construct interpretive accounts of the past, narrating not only what happened, but how and why.

The following lesson is written to match the content we covered in our staff development workshop in May 2005, but the form is adaptable to the content you provide for your own classroom.

Focus Questions

1. How did the economic and social changes occurring during the Great Depression and World War Two alter the type of work done by New Yorkers after the war?
2. During this same period, what changes occurred in the work performed by women outside the home?
3. How did New Yorkers, individually and collectively, advocate for the principles expressed by President Roosevelt in his Economic Bill of Rights?

Learning Goals

Students will create their own exhibits to reinforce their understanding of the content by undertaking a project that involves both interpretation and publication. Creating their own exhibits will also help students to analyze the interpretive choices made by others in exhibits or other media.

Materials

- Photocopies of primary source documents (photos, newspaper articles, documents) from Brooklyn Historical Society, the Internet, and from the core library in your classroom; this is your "collection."
- Activity sheet.
- Chart paper + tape or clips for hanging.
- Construction paper.
- Markers.
- Scissors.
- Glue sticks.

Minilesson

Primary Source Exploration: As a large group, examine and discuss the primary sources in your collection of mid-twentieth century photographs, newspaper articles, artifacts, and narratives. Aloud, identify who/what/when/where/why in each source.

Brainstorm: Discuss possible topics for exhibits. Jot down your topics on chart paper. Examples: industrialization in Brooklyn, women in the workplace during WWII, the struggle for fair housing, and so on. After you've identified topics, think about main ideas.

Student Activity

Primary Source Exploration: Divide into small groups and distribute one activity sheet per group.* Choose one group member to write answers on the sheet. The activity sheet should include space to record:

- Exhibit title.
- Main idea.
- 3-5 photographs or documents the group chooses from the collection.
- Exhibit labels for each photograph or document, including who/what/when/where/why. (Make sure students write complete sentences.)
- Topic summary.

*Note: The activity sheet is for the group to draft their title, main idea, sources, labels, and summaries. Once the sheet is completed, the group will transfer what they've written to a piece of chart paper as their exhibit.

Assemble and Hang Exhibits:

Each small group should have materials to affix their photographs and labels to one piece of chart paper for display. Hang each group's exhibit around the classroom. Each student should have the opportunity to do a "walk-through" (review) of all the exhibits.

Share:

After the review, each group should explain in turn their concepts and strategies for developing their exhibit (topic, main idea, etc.). Students should share their findings and conclusions about the photographs and documents in their exhibits. Encourage students to make connections between the exhibit exploration at BHS and how they created their own classroom exhibits. Chart their responses.



Women Navy Yard Workers, 1942

Courtesy of Brooklyn Historical Society



WEB SITES WE RECOMMEND FOR FURTHER STUDY ABOUT BROOKLYN:

Brooklyn Public Library

www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org

Visit the BPL Web site for a Brooklyn reading list as well as links to Brooklyn-based cultural organizations, community events, art exhibits, and more.

WorkLore: Brooklyn Workers Speak

<http://www.worklore.net/>

A joint project of the Brooklyn Historical Society and Brooklyn Public Library, this site offers a personal perspective into the lives of Brooklyn's workers, past and present.



BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS HERE TO HELP!

All BHS programs are designed to help teachers use primary source documents and to meet social studies, English Language Arts, and math standards. Using Brooklyn as the backdrop, BHS curriculum materials explore the building of America from the Revolution to modern day by studying the people, places, and events that shaped its growth. Materials available include laminated museum-quality images and Teacher's Guides with detailed lesson plans and comprehensive historical overviews. Other BHS programs include exhibit tours, classroom visits, and professional development services. To see the full list of programs available, please visit our Web site at www.brooklynhistory.org or contact Brooklyn Historical Society, Education Department, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, Tel. 718-222-4111, ext. 222.

BHS FUN FACT

The 18-foot Dodgers' 1955 World Championship Banner currently hanging quietly in the new exhibit "Dodgers Do it: Celebrating the 1955 Big Win" at the Brooklyn Historical Society has had a busy life! When it was new, the pennant flew in Ebbets Field celebrating the World Series win over the Yankees. When the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles in 1958, the banner followed them. In 1959, a group of sportswriters attending a World Series press conference in LA noticed the pennant hanging and decided it belonged back in Brooklyn. Led by Stan Isaacs, a reporter for Newsday, the group created a distraction in the room and spirited the banner out of the hotel and back to New York where it lived in hiding for 20 years. The banner was then donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Once they learned of its provenance, The Hall of Fame gave it back to the LA Dodgers. Dodgers' owner, Peter O'Malley, felt that the banner should live in Brooklyn and in 1995 he donated it to the Brooklyn Historical Society.



Ebbets Field, 1950

Courtesy of Brooklyn Historical Society

Contact New York City & the Nation and its partner organizations:

For more information about New York City & the Nation, please contact the grant's Project Directors: Elise Abegg, Director of Social Studies, at eabegg@nycboe.net and Julie Maurer, Director of Education, Gotham Center for New York City History, at gothamed@gc.cuny.edu

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Announcing the Gotham Center's new Web site for teachers:

www.gothamed.org

The Gotham Center for New York City History presents a new online resource for teachers, grades K–12! Connect to exciting and useful materials, find out about professional development dealing with historical content and pedagogy, and interact with your colleagues. GothamED pools the talent and energy of teachers and scholars, as well as educators from the city's cultural institutions, to promote and support quality history instruction.



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