

LOST LA

CURRICULUM PROJECT

HISTORICAL INQUIRY QUESTION

How has the perception of Los Angeles changed over time?

LOST LA EPISODE

Building the Metropolis



USC Libraries



How has the perception of Los Angeles changed over time?

Author of Lesson

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Content Standards

8.8.2: Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny (e.g., the Lewis and Clark expedition, accounts of the removal of Indians, the Cherokees' "Trail of Tears," settlement of the Great Plains) and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.

8.8.5: Discuss Mexican settlements and their locations, cultural traditions, attitudes toward slavery, land-grant system and economies.

CCSS Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

Lost LA Episode

This lesson aligns with the Lost LA episode "Building the Metropolis," in which researchers analyze how people have visualized the space encompassing Los Angeles, and how they chose to build the city. In this classroom lesson, we examine how this perception of Los Angeles has changed and ask students to predict how that perception will continue to change going into the future. This lesson focuses specifically on the second portion of the episode, "Iron Sprawl," as well as the third portion, "Concrete Fantasy."

Overview of Lesson

Students will explore differing perceptions of what the space encompassing Los Angeles has represented over time by analyzing various primary source photographs and then juxtaposing this learning with their own perception of modern-day Los Angeles to write a narrative of what a future Los Angeles might look like.

Sources

- A. Earliest-known photo of Los Angeles, circa 1862. The view looks east over the Los Angeles Plaza from atop Fort Moore Hill. Courtesy of the USC Libraries – California Historical Society Collection.
- B. Los Angeles Department of City Planning. 1941. A Parkway Plan for the City of Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Area.
- C. Photograph: 1933 view of the Sixth Street Viaduct. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Examiner Collection, USC Libraries.
- D. Photograph: A portion of the 6th Street Bridge is dismantled. Courtesy of the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering.
- E. Photograph: Sixth Street Viaduct. Michael Maltzan Architecture.

Procedures

1. Warm-Up: The teacher will have students answer the following question to activate prior knowledge:

What do you think of when you hear “Los Angeles”?

Ask a few students to share out their responses and record these on board or chart paper. Let students know that these are their **perceptions**, or **ways in which they see the city**.

2. The teacher will now review the objectives of the lesson and also introduce the inquiry question: **How has the perception of Los Angeles changed over time?**
3. Next, the teacher will model the annotation strategy (**See-Mean-Matter**) with the earliest-known photo of Los Angeles (**Source A**) using a document camera. Have students look at the photograph in **Source A** and, with them, infer the photographer’s perception of Los Angeles by answering the questions on handout.
4. Then, play the second and third portions of the Lost LA episode “**Building the Metropolis**,” starting at the 8:11 mark, to learn more about how perceptions of Los Angeles changed as the city expanded.
5. Next, students will explore Los Angeles freeways and how they once represented the best hope for L.A. by reading **Source B**. Students read independently or in pairs and answer questions at bottom of handout.
6. Then, inform students that they will apply this understanding of Los Angeles freeways and see how that perception has continued to shift over time by looking at the 6th St. bridge in Los Angeles as a case study.
7. Explain to students that they will now annotate the 6th St. bridge photographs in **Sources C-E** on their own using the same annotation strategy used earlier (See-Mean-

Matter). Students can do this annotation work in pairs or groups. Ask for volunteers to share out their responses to the whole-class once finished.

8. Have students write an exit ticket on a separate sheet of paper or index card in which they reflect once more on the warm-up question:

Having finished the lesson, how has your perception of Los Angeles changed?

Assessment

Students complete an eight-sentence paragraph describing their vision for what a future Los Angeles might look like. You can also have students draw an accompanying picture to go with their paragraph, engaging multiple modalities in the process. A guide on how to write paragraph is included at end of packet.

Bibliography

- Masters, Nathan. 2017. Concrete Fantasy: When Southern California's Freeways Were New (And Empty). KCET. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/concrete-fantasy-when-southern-californias-freeways-were-new-and-empty>
- Masters, Nathan. 2013. When L.A. Was Empty: Wide-Open SoCal Landscapes. KCET. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/when-la-was-empty-wide-open-social-landscapes>
- Masters, Nathan. 2012. A Brief History of Bridges in Los Angeles County. KCET. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/a-brief-history-of-bridges-in-los-angeles-county>
- Los Angeles Department of City Planning. 1941. A Parkway Plan for the City of Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Area. http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DPGTL/trafficplans/1941_parkway_plan_city_los_angeles_metropolitan_area.pdf

Additional articles to help build context for the 6th St. bridge portion of the lesson:

- Curwen, Thomas. 2015. New 6th Street Viaduct is a bridge to a different future. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-sixth-street-bridge-20150601-story.html>
- Ho, Connie K. 2013. Mixed Community Response to Sixth Street Viaduct Replacement Project. KCET. <https://www.kcet.org/earth-focus/mixed-community-response-to-sixth-street-viaduct-replacement-project>

SOURCE A

Earliest-known photo of Los Angeles, circa 1862. The view looks east over the Los Angeles Plaza from atop Fort Moore Hill. Courtesy of the USC Libraries – California Historical Society Collection

Masters, Nathan. When L.A. Was Empty: Wide-Open SoCal Landscapes. KCET. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/when-la-was-empty-wide-open-socal-landscapes>



SEE What do you see in picture?	MEAN What perception of L.A. does this photograph show?	MATTER How is this perception similar to your own? How is it different?

SOURCE B

A Parkway Plan for the City of Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Area. 1941. Los Angeles Department of City Planning.

Los Angeles Department of City Planning. 1941. A Parkway Plan for the City of Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Area.

In 1941, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning commissioned a report where they detailed a plan to build freeways (parkways) to address the transportation problem of their time. The excerpt below is from a section in the report titled "Significance of the Parkway Plan to the City of Los Angeles". Read the following points and determine the city's perspective of freeways, which they refer to in the report as parkways.

"...The parkway plan which was developed for the city and region will most **adequately** serve its [transportation] requirements.

1. The system of parkways included in the plan will greatly improve traffic circulation throughout the city and region. By the very nature of the design all delays and inconveniences of the present street system are eliminated. Traffic safety is assured by removing all points of friction and collision by separating the grades of all crossing and by diving roadways.
2. The construction of a system of parkways will relieve the pressure on existing streets. Through and long haul traffic will be attracted to the parkways leaving the surface streets to serve the local traffic for which they were designed and for which they are **adequate**.

...

5. Los Angeles is the first city to plan a comprehensive system of parkways for rapid transit.
6. Parkways, of the type recommended in this report, will stand the test of time... The plan is **adequate** at the present time under present conditions and for the future..."

DEFINITIONS

adequate: satisfactory or acceptable in quality or quantity

Source Questions

According to the report, how would freeways (parkways) solve the traffic problem? Find evidence in the source to support your answer.

Based on your knowledge of freeways today, were they correct in their predictions?

The report continuously uses the word adequate, which is in bold. Using context clues, what does this word mean?

SOURCE C

1933 view of the Sixth Street Viaduct [Bridge]. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Examiner Collection, USC Libraries. [Lesson Note: Bridge construction finished in 1932.]

Masters, Nathan. A Brief History of Bridges in Los Angeles County. KCET. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/a-brief-history-of-bridges-in-los-angeles-county>



SEE What do you see in picture?	MEAN What perception of L.A. does this photograph show?	MATTER How is this perception similar to your own? How is it different?

SOURCE D

A portion of the 6th Street Bridge is dismantled.

Courtesy of the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering



SEE What do you see in picture?	MEAN What perception of L.A. does this photograph show?	MATTER How is this perception similar to your own? How is it different?

THE 8-SENTENCE PARAGRAPH FORMAT

This writing strategy can be used to support students in the writing of the “Assessment” portion of this lesson.

There must be thorough “commentary” (explanation/analysis) of your “concrete detail” (textual support/evidence) that relates back to the main points or topic sentence of the whole paragraph

This writing strategy can be used to support students in the writing of the “Assessment” portion of this lesson.

Sentence 1

Thesis, Claim or Topic Sentence: state the topic of your paragraph and the main point you want to make about the topic.

Sentence 2

Concrete detail (example to prove/support #1)

Sentence 3

Commentary (explains why/how the detail proves or clarifies the thesis)

Sentence 4

Commentary (further explains or analyzes CD)

Sentence 5

Concrete detail (gives a second example to prove/support #1)

Sentence 6

Commentary (explains why/how #5 relates to #1)

Sentence 7

Commentary (further explains or analyzes CD)

Sentence 8

Closing Commentary (summarizes paragraph, restates topic or thesis sentence and does not introduce new information.)