

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

Exploring Early Manhattan Through Art

Students analyze two paintings by artist Len Tantillo depicting early Manhattan in the 1650-1660s. Then they discuss how art can reveal geographic information about place.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

Arts and Music, Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

CONTENTS

3 Images

OVERVIEW

Students analyze two paintings by artist Len Tantillo depicting early Manhattan in the 1650-1660s. Then they discuss how art can reveal geographic information about place.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/exploring-early-manhattan-through-art/>

DIRECTIONS

1. Review the history of 17th century Dutch New Amsterdam.

Review the history of colonial settlement in the Hudson River region. Ask students to locate the mouth of the Hudson River in New York on a wall map of the United States. Then show students the map of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary and have them identify the Hudson River and New York City. Remind students that Dutch explorer Henry Hudson traveled across the Atlantic Ocean on the *Half Moon* in 1609 and continued to sail up the Hudson River. Dutch colonists followed Hudson and established settlements along the Hudson River. One of these settlements was New Amsterdam. Ask: *What is the modern-day name of New Amsterdam?*

(New York City) Tell students that the New Amsterdam settlement was mainly located on the island of Manhattan, which is one of the five boroughs, or sections, of modern-day New York City. Have students identify Manhattan on the map.

2. Build background about artist Len Tantillo and his work.

Explain to students that Len Tantillo is a contemporary painter, but he started his career as an architectural designer. Many of his paintings and illustrations focus on scenes and objects of historical significance. In 2009, in honor of the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage, Tantillo painted numerous pictures of the historic Hudson River Valley. Tell students that they will analyze two of those paintings: *Fort Amsterdam* and *Manhattan, 1660*. Both of the paintings depict Manhattan around 1660. Explain to students that Fort Amsterdam was located at the southern tip of Manhattan Island. Then tell students Fort Amsterdam served as the administrative capital of the Dutch colony, as well as a military fortification protecting Manhattan from attack.

3. Have students analyze two paintings by Len Tantillo.

Project the images of Len Tantillo's paintings, *Fort Amsterdam* and *Manhattan, 1660*, at the front of the room. Have students work independently to study the paintings and take notes on what each painting tells about:

- time period
- landscape
- climate
- architecture and the built, or human-constructed, environment
- culture and lifestyle

4. Have students share their observations in small groups.

Divide students into small groups. Have groups share, discuss, and list their observations. Check in with each group to make sure all students are contributing and that each group is compiling a list of observations. Then have each group share at least one observation with the class.

5. Have a whole-class discussion about the process of producing historical artwork.

Remind students that Len Tantillo is a contemporary artist who created historical artwork.

Ask:

- *What type of information would Tantillo need to create historically accurate paintings? (information about the climate, the physical landscape, and the architecture and built environment of 17th century New Amsterdam)*
- *What sources might Tantillo have used to gather this information? (encyclopedias, government records such as maps and surveys, artist renderings, firsthand accounts such as journals, Farmers' Almanac)*
- *What did you learn about the history and geography of 17th century New Amsterdam from analyzing the two paintings?*

Extending the Learning

Have each student select a photograph or image that depicts a present-day place that someone could visit. Have students answer the following questions for their image:

- *What geographic features are revealed in the image?*
- *How does the image influence your desire to visit this place?*

Have students present their images and geographic interpretations to the class.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

- Arts and Music
- **Geography**
 - Human Geography
 - Physical Geography

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- analyze the geographic characteristics of two historical paintings
- explain how art depicts geographic features such as climate, landscape, and culture

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Analyzing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 17:

How to apply geography to interpret the past

- Standard 4:

The physical and human characteristics of places

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ARTS EDUCATION

- Visual Arts (5-8) Standard 4:

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Pencils
- Pens
- Wall map of the United States
- Writing paper

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction
- Small-group instruction

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Len Tantillo is a contemporary artist who painted a series of works depicting the Hudson River Valley in the 17th century, in honor of the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's journey up the Hudson River. By studying Tantillo's paintings, students learn how art can convey information about time, place, and culture.

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Atlantic Ocean	<i>noun</i>	one of Earth's four oceans, separating Europe and Africa from North and South America.
climate	<i>noun</i>	all weather conditions for a given location over a period of time.
colonialism	<i>noun</i>	type of government where a geographic area is ruled by a foreign power.
culture	<i>noun</i>	learned behavior of people, including their languages, belief systems, social structures, institutions, and material goods.
estuary	<i>noun</i>	mouth of a river where the river's current meets the sea's tide.
explorer	<i>noun</i>	person who studies unknown areas.
Hudson River	<i>noun</i>	large waterway that flows in the U.S. state of New York.
island	<i>noun</i>	body of land surrounded by water.
landscape	<i>noun</i>	the geographic features of a region.
mouth	<i>noun</i>	place where a river empties its water. Usually rivers enter another body of water at their mouths.
New Amsterdam	<i>noun</i>	(1626-1664) Dutch settlement on Manhattan Island, renamed New York by the British.
settlement	<i>noun</i>	community or village.
voyage	<i>noun</i>	long journey or trip.

For Further Exploration

Interactives

- [The Hudson: The River That Defined America](#)

Websites

- [National Geographic Magazine: Manhattan—Before New York](#)
- [National Geographic Travel: Road Trip—Hudson Valley, New York](#)

PARTNER



FUNDER



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