

Title:	City People, City Stories
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Organization:	Learning By Design in Massachusetts
Location:	Boston Society of Architects www.architects.org/education
Grade Level:	3 – 8
Time Allotment:	Introductory Activity: 30 minutes or more Activity: 30-45 minutes Culminating Activity: 1-2 hours
Overview:	<p>This lesson plan refers to Box City. For a better understanding of Box City visit the Box City Tour at http://www.cubekc.org/architivities/box1.htm. Understanding architecture and cities must begin with an understanding of the people of that city. This set of activities enables children to think about the city from that perspective: the children create scale Box City citizens; then, following their natural inclination to invent stories about the people and buildings they create, they develop, write, and share those stories.</p> <p>As a precursor to these activities the teacher introduces illustrations and excerpts from children’s literature wherein authors and illustrators describe places in the built environment.</p>
Subject Matter:	Language Arts (literacy), Visual Arts, Mathematics (scale), Social Studies (sense of self, sense of place)
Learning Objectives:	<p>The children will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See and hear examples of how authors and illustrators <p>Describe architecture places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create ¼”=1’ scale Box City citizens • Develop stories about the citizens of Box City • Share those stories • Recognize common elements in the process of design planners and architects use to design the built environment, and the process writers use to design stories.
Standards:	Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/

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	<p>English Language Arts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing as an essential way to develop, clarify and communicate ideas (Guiding Principle 4) • Students will identify, analyze and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction (Standard 12) <p>Visual Arts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary Connections (Standard 10) <p>Mathematics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and Number Relationships (Standard 1.6) • Computation and Estimation (Standard 1.8)
<p>CUBE components:</p>	<p>Box City: <i>Does your City Work for You?, Who Makes the Rules?, Role Playing</i></p> <p>Quotes, pages. 11, 75, 141:</p> <p>“When we look at our cities, we see ourselves.”</p> <p>“Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are.”</p> <p>“Place is where we are. Place is where we want to be. Place is what we want to create.”</p>
<p>Materials:</p>	<p>For scale figures you will need per child:</p> <p>1 pipe cleaner 1 piece of fabric 1.5” x 2.5” 1 5” piece of yarn 1 piece of oaktag or index card 3”x3” (plus extra craft materials for adding details to scale figures) scissors stapler pencils</p> <p>Resources (found in Resources and Handouts link): Houses in Books</p> <p>For <i>Box City News</i>: student writing and drawing materials; plus method for reproducing newsletters, e.g. computer</p> <p>Handouts (found in Resources and Handouts link): Scale Figures Scale Rulers: ¼” = 1’</p>

<p>Prep for Teachers:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select books, illustrations, and excerpts from <i>Houses in Books</i> list to share with students. • Prepare scale figures materials ahead of time, as needed. • Determine how you will print and reproduce <i>Box City News</i>. • Consider informing curriculum specialists about the cross-curricular potential of these activities, e.g. involving the Art Teacher in the drawing exercise.
<p>Introductory Activity:</p>	<p>Places and Spaces in Literature</p> <p>Once, while typing a draft for a book, I allowed myself the diversion of building a model Lego house to use in my next day’s design work with a third grade class. As I was alternately writing and building I realized that, in much the same way an author “builds” with words, an architect or illustrator creates with pencil and paper, or a Lego-builder builds with blocks. Each designer starts with a vision in the mind, then picks up the “materials” and begins connecting and creating. At some point each designer stops and evaluates the work thus far; sometimes this leads to a disassembling and reassembling of the structure (or drawing or paragraph), and so on, until the designer’s inner voice tells him or her that, yes, the story (or drawing, or building) is just right.</p> <p>This series of activities helps children—whatever their strengths within the multiple intelligences model (some children are stronger in language, some in math, some in spatial activities for example)—to see and work within a common ground—to use the design process not only to build, but to write about what they build. I have tested out this analogy with groups of children, and yes, they agree, the writer, the artist and the builder are all engaging in the process of design.</p> <p>So begin these activities by selecting and sharing with your students examples of how writers and illustrators describe buildings in books, how they communicate a sense of place.</p> <p>My favorite picture book for this is Roxaboxen, by Alice McLerran. Tar Beach has a strong sense of place; in Anno’s Journey every page is filled with potential stories; and what more powerful place for a child than Max’s room in Where the Wild Things Are.</p> <p>Upper elementary and middle school fiction has its share of</p>

	<p>descriptions of places and spaces, but I have found none to compare to page one of The Hobbit, wherein Mr. Tolkien carefully and completely takes his readers on a tour of a hobbit hole. When we learn of a hobbit's architecture, we learn about him. The next activities will build upon this connection.</p>
<p>Learning Activity:</p>	<p>Box City Citizens Even before the Box City is built, have the children create scale figures to represent the people of Box City. This activity works best in ¼"=1' scale, wherein every ¼" of scale person represents 1' of real-life person. For younger children this scale can be described as 1" = 4'. Ruler can be found at the Resources and Handouts link.</p> <p>This activity will work quite well even without a major Box City event—the children can create people, then make one-box-homes for each person, or build a quick “Boomtown” city out of boxes or blocks. This activity also works when the children building historic cities—simply turn the figures into scale Romans, Egyptians, Colonists, and so on.</p> <p>Following the <i>Scale Figures</i> sheet, have each child construct a scale person. They should invent a name, age, and occupation for their person, and be allowed to add embellishments (e.g. yarn hair, backpacks, pets, etc.) to the basic person to better illustrate their personality. Be sure to create a scale person yourself, too.</p> <p>It is very likely that once the scale figures are built, or even half-built, you will see the children beginning to “play” with them.</p> <p>They are already inventing stories; encourage them to orally share these stories with each other: “Who is your person? What will he be doing in the City? Where will he be living? and so on.”</p>
<p>Culminating Activity:</p>	<p>The children have seen, heard, and discussed how authors and illustrators communicate their ideas about architecture. They have built Box City people, and built their Box City. What follows next, quite easily and naturally, is the development and production of the <i>Box City News</i>.</p> <p>You may want to allow the children to be involved in the whole newspaper development process—they can brainstorm as to what types of articles the newspaper would need. You can of</p>

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	<p>course turn this more into a collection of stories, too.</p> <p>Each “article” would most likely include writing and an illustration. The drawing and first draft need to be done while the children are in the city. The Art teacher may assist with or extend the drawing activity.</p> <p>Subsequent writing drafts can be done back in the classroom; you may want to allow each child’s “citizen” to be placed on each writer’s desk to provide continued inspiration and help each child remember his or her point of view. Allow for several drafts before the final copy is ready for the press.</p> <p>To end this sequence of activities reproduce and share copies of the <i>Box City News</i>. Ask the children to compare the methods they used to communicate their ideas about cities – writing, drawing and building. Did some children find one method more challenging than others? More rewarding in the end? Did combining the methods offer, overall, a more defined view of the City?</p>
<p>Evaluation/ Teacher Reflection:</p>	<p>This project can be defined and therefore evaluated as a Design project.</p> <p>1. Define the design problem: <i>Whom</i> are we designing for? With <i>what</i> materials? <i>When</i> should we be done? <i>Where</i> will the final product end up? <i>Why</i> are we doing this?</p> <p>In this case, your children should help you write the answers to these questions, e.g.: “We are creating scale Box City citizens... so that we may better tell their stories... We are telling their stories because....”</p> <p>At the end of the activity ask the children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did we solve our stated design problem? • How well did we solve it? • If we had the time, should it have been improved upon? How? <p>The <i>Scale Figures Sheet</i> and <i>Scale Rulers Sheet</i> will help the children self-assess their citizen-building activity. These handouts can be found at the Resources and Handouts link. Teachers may evaluate student writings through their usual assessment approaches.</p>

<p>Cross Curricular Extensions:</p>	<p>Math – Use the scale figures and rulers to engage in further explorations of scale.</p> <p>Science – Use the wiry scale figure bodies to discuss how our bodies are structured.</p> <p>Art – Bring the scale citizens and some of the buildings to aid drawing projects, e.g. perspective drawings.</p>
<p>Community Connections:</p>	<p>Invite a local news reporter to speak with the class. Share the students' Box City stories with the reporter, and discuss how reporters share the stories of real community members.</p> <p>Trade photographs, drawings and pages from <i>your Box City News</i> via mail or internet with other students who have done Box Cities in other parts of the world.</p>