



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2013 Volume IV: Invisible Cities: The Arts and Renewable Community

Whence We Stand: A Visual/Geography/History Adventure

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Invisible cities. They are all around us, revealed in the most obvious yet overlooked places: revealed in beautifully adorned masonry on the exterior of Baroque and Victorian edifices, awnings and windowpanes, and centuries-old wrought iron fences that surround a common space where sightseers stroll, the homeless find shelter, and community activists convene to protest injustice, and more ... all revealing past and present contributions of people across cultures—some too often too omitted and/or forgotten.

This premise serves as the undergirding for my curriculum unit, Whence We Stand. Targeted at third graders, it has been created to help young learners—particularly residents within urban settings who have had limited interaction beyond the boundaries of their immediate neighborhoods—internalize being part of a broader, historically and culturally rich locality. Students across cultures will take an experiential journey to New Haven Green and surrounding areas, navigating diverse landscapes layered in "invisibly visible" cities. Through complementary visits to landmark venues, coupled with related readings, collaborative map-making exercises, and complementary writing activities, young learners will grasp the concepts of time and place; its collective impact on physical and human characteristics and interactions; changing landscapes and since the inception of the New Haven colony that render all inhabitants across centuries a valued, integral part of the historic community.

(Developed for Social Studies/Language Arts/Mathematics/Social Development, grade 3; recommended for Social Studies/Language Arts/Mathematics/Social Development, grades 3-5)

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