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

Vacant Lot: The Chicago Ickes Community Remembered

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by Sarah A. Weidmann

My unit, Vacant Lot: The Chicago Ickes Community Remembered, answers the essential question: Where does a place go that is no longer there? The content objectives connect sociology, history, and drama. Through a case study of the Chicago public-housing project, the Harold Ickes Towers Community, students will write reflective essays in relation to the essential question and a historic quotation. The quotation asks students to consider the decisions of policy-makers about public housing in Chicago. Students will also re-enact a moment in time from Ickes' oral history that shows the fight for human dignity, the theme (or heart) of this work. The purpose of this re-enactment is to create public dialogue about social policy in real peoples' lives in Chicago. As the final component, students will create a memorial (inspired by the process of Maya Lin) to place at the Ickes Community site, now a vacant lot behind our school.

(Developed for Language Arts and Social Studies, grades 7-8; recommended for Writing, Reading, Social Studies, and Drama, grades 6-8)

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