

Teachers' Guide for Cobblestone

January 2013: A Visit to the White House Neighborhood

By Debbie Vilardi

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Goal: To learn about the history and impact of Lafayette Square, the White House Neighborhood

*Always have a parent or trusted adult help with web research.

Before Beginning:

Study the cover and Table of Contents pages. What do you know about the neighborhood mentioned?

"A Neighborhood Is Born" by Pamela Scott (Pages 2-5)

Vocabulary: abutting, elite

Comprehension:

1. What other cities have been our national capitals?
2. What lead Congress to select the Potomac as host of the new capital?
3. Why did Washington select the specific site he chose?
4. Describe Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for the city.
5. How were some streets formed and named?
6. What groups of people moved into the neighborhood? Why?

Research Topics: The White House, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, geography of Washington, D.C, United States capitals

"Hello, Neighbor" by Pamela Scott (Pages 4-5)

Vocabulary: auspicious

Research: The War of 1812, presidents' lives in the White House, Lafayette Square

"A Park Takes Shape" by Ann Bowman Smith (Pages 8-11)

Vocabulary: equestrian

Comprehension:

1. What was this area supposed to become according to the original plans?
2. How was the square used during construction?
3. What separated the park from the grounds of the White House?
4. What happened on January 8, 1853?
5. Why is the statue significant?
6. What objects are grouped with the statue and why?

Writing Activity: Pretend you are visiting the region as the park develops. Write a letter home describing what you encounter.

Research: Lafayette Park, Charles Bulfinch, Marquis de Lafayette, statues in Lafayette Park, General Andrew Jackson, National Historic Landmarks

"A Lasting Treasure" by Ronda Bernstein (Pages 12-13)

"A Place for Parties and Politics" by Kathryn Lasdow (Pages 14-15)

"From House to Hotel" by William B. Bushong (Page 29)

Vocabulary: parquet floors, salon

Comprehension: Answer each question for all three articles.

1. Why is this building historically significant?
2. Who designed the structure?
3. Was it built for a special reason? If yes, what was the reason?
4. What is the name of each building and how did it earn that name?
5. What is the building used for today or what stands on its site?
6. Locate each building in the painting on pages 6 & 7. Note: Octagon House is not labeled.

Research: Dr. William Thornton, Colonel John Tayloe III, the Octagon, Decatur House, Commodore Stephen Decatur, Barbary Wars, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, John Gadsby, General Edward F. Beale, John Milton Hay, Henry Brooks Adams, H.H. Richardson, Harry Wardman, Hay-Adams Hotel

"If Walls Could Talk" by Alexandra Lane (Pages 16-17)

Comprehension:

1. Why are the slave quarters historically significant?
2. Why are Dupuy's actions remarkable for the time period?
3. What can you infer about how Gadsby treated his slaves?

Research: Charlotte Dupuy, Henry Clay, District of Columbia's Emancipation Act

"Tracing the Neighborhood's Black History" Courtney Speaker (Page 18-20)

Vocabulary: contraband, segregated, desegregated

Comprehension:

In what ways did the black community support its members?

Writing Activity: Select a time period from the article. Using information from all of the articles you have read, describe life as a slave or free black person in that time period.

Math Activity: Based on information in the article, what was the area of one of the temporary shelters that housed those who built the White House?

Research: Paul Jennings, Dolley Madison, Daniel Webster, *A Colored Man's Reminiscences of James Madison*

"The President's Guest House" by Candace S. Shireman (Pages 21-23)

Vocabulary: confidant

Comprehension:

1. How did Francis Preston Blair influence Americans?
2. How did his sons do so?
3. Who prevented Blair House from being destroyed?
4. Why was an official guest house necessary?
5. When might a former president stay at Blair House?

Discussion: Read the "Did You Know?" on page 23. Why do four groups run the house? What roles do you think each plays?

Research: Francis Preston Blair, Montgomery Blair, Francis Preston Blair Jr., Lee House, President Harry S. Truman

"Save the Square" by William B. Bushong (Pages 26-28)

Vocabulary: McMillan Plan, urban renewal

Comprehension:

1. Why was the Roosevelt family residing in Townsend House
2. What does the mine negotiation illustrate about the changing neighborhood?
3. Why did Mrs. Kennedy intervene to preserve the character of Lafayette Square?
4. How did Mrs. Kennedy's actions fit with public sentiment?
5. What are requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966?

Writing Activity: Select a local building or one of the structures preserved in Washington, D. C. and write an argument for its preservation as a National Historic Landmark.

Research: President Theodore Roosevelt, United Mine Workers of America, Townsend House, Cass Gilbert, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, John Carl Warnecke, National Trust for Historic Preservation

"Protest in the Park" by Katie Munn (Pages 30-32)

Vocabulary: redress, suffragists, antinuclear

Comprehension:

1. Why do people protest at Lafayette Park?
2. What did the suffragists want?
3. When did they earn this?
4. What did African Americans want?
5. When did they earn these rights?
6. What did Vietnam War protestors want?
7. Who are William Thomas and Concepcion Picciotto?
8. Why do you think you need a permit to protest with more than 25 people?

Art Activity: Select a topic you feel passionate about. Create a protest sign or poster supporting your cause. Use those pictured with the article as models if needed.

Research: the First Amendment, National Woman's Party, the Nineteenth Amendment, 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, the Vietnam War, William Thomas and Concepcion Picciotto

"A New Home for White House History" by John P. Riley (Pages 33-35)

Vocabulary: haberdasher

Comprehension:

1. Why is the history of the White House important?
2. What may have made the Decatur House a good choice for the National Center for White House History?
3. Why did it take two years to get the building ready?
4. What was discovered during the renovation?
5. What programs are available?

Research: White House Historical Association, David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History at Decatur House

"Decatur Descendant" by Meg Chorlian (Pages 36-37)

Comprehension:

1. What is Stephen Hammond's relationship with Decatur House?
2. How did he discover this?
3. Based on the interview, what kind of person was Peter Joseph?

Social Studies Activity: Contact your oldest family members and interview them about their ancestors. Ask if they have letters or objects that illustrate their stories and present this information to your class with a family tree.

Research: Nancy Syphax

Activity for the Entire Issue: Architecture played an important role in the design and culture of the neighborhood and individual buildings around the White House. Discuss how it impacted the area. Consider how the character may have differed if all of the buildings were from the same era or reflected a particular style. What does architecture say about your own neighborhoods?