

# Teachers' Guide for Cobblestone

July/August 2012: Keeping It Green: Frederick Law Olmsted

By Debbie Vilardi

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Goal: To learn about Frederick Law Olmsted and his legacy of landscape architecture.

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

Before Beginning: Think about local public parks and parks you have visited. What are their benefits and how are they used? Why are these public places important?

"Life as a Landscape Architect: An Interview with Susan M. Hatchell" by Meg Chorlian (Pages 2-5)

Comprehension:

1. How did growing up in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. influence Ms. Hatchell's future career choice?
2. Describe the process of becoming a landscape architect.
3. What is Hatchell's favorite project and why?
4. What are the steps to completing a project?
5. Why does it take a long time ?
6. How has the profession changed since Frederick Law Olmsted's time?

Writing Activity: Study the plans and pictures on pages 3 and 4. Describe the space before and after the improvement project. What changes were made from the original plan? Why might the landscape architects have implemented those changes?

Art Activity: Draw a plan for a current local historical site or park. Include changes you think would improve your location.

Community Involvement: Attend a meeting of your local town board or parks' department and discuss the items that were covered at the meeting.

Research Topics: Landscape, American Society of Landscape Architects, Frederick Law Olmsted

"The Search for a Career" by Helen Kitrosser (Pages 6-8)

"Man of Letters" Helen Kitrosser (Page 9)

Vocabulary: Bilge, typhoid fever, scurvy, yeoman, abolitionist

Comprehension:

1. Why did Olmsted have difficulty in college?
2. What were some of Olmsted's early jobs?
3. What did Olmsted enjoy about Europe?
4. How did he get his job as a special correspondent?

Writing Activity: Consider each of Olmsted's jobs alongside the interview on pages 2-5. How might each job have helped inform his later career?

Research: *An Essay on the Picturesque* by Sir Uvedale Price, the China trade, scientific farming, books and articles by Frederick Law Olmsted, abolitionists, *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, *The Nation*

"The First Public Park" by Marcia Amidon Lusted (Pages 10-14)

Vocabulary: Eminent domain, draftsman, Rapid transit, inextricable

Comprehension:

1. Why did New Yorkers want a public park?
2. Why did Olmsted and Vaux make a good team?
3. What were some features of their design for "Greensward"?
4. Why did Olmsted argue against a grand avenue within the park?
5. How is the park used today?

Writing Activity: Research and write a *Cobblestone* article about one of the "Major Works" mentioned in the sidebar.

Research: New York City in 1857, Seneca Village, Calvert Vaux, Central Park, park commission president Andrew Green

"Olmsted Takes Charge" by Helen Kitrosser (Page 15)

Comprehension:

1. How did Olmsted injure his leg?
2. Why might Olmsted have been asked to serve as executive secretary of the Sanitary Commission?
3. Why might the military have been reluctant to work with volunteers?
4. What were some of the commission's activities?

Research: The Civil War, Army Medical Bureau, U.S. Sanitary Commission

"A Dynamic Duo" by Molly Troy (Pages 16-17)

Writing Activity: Pretend you are Vaux. Write the arguments he may have used to convince Olmsted to work on Prospect Park.

Research: Andrew Jackson Downing

"California Calls" by Gina Hagler (Pages 18-19)

Comprehension:

1. Why did Olmsted accept the job in California?
2. Why were Olmsted's projects out west architecturally significant?

Discussion: Read the excerpt of Olmsted's report on page 19. Do you agree with his opinions? Would you like to see more public spaces established or more development?

Research: Mariposa Mining Company, Yosemite Valley, Mariposa Grove

"Parks and Parkways" by Marcia Amidon Lusted (Page 20)

Comprehension:

1. Why were Olmsted's ideas for Buffalo, NY pioneering?
2. Why were some of the original parks destroyed?

Research: John Charles Olmsted; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.; Buffalo Olmsted Park Conservancy; Buffalo, New York

"A Place to Ponder and to Rest" by Kem Knapp Sawyer (Pages 21-23)

Vocabulary: Verdure

Comprehension:

1. What was L'Enfant's plan for Washington, D.C.?
2. What were some of the problems that developed?
3. How did the importance of the Capitol affect Olmsted's plans?
4. What improvements needed to be made before the main project could begin?

5. Why is the visitor center underground?
6. Why were some changes to the views necessary?
7. Why is water a major maintenance concern?

Research: Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Senate Commission on Public Grounds, Charles Beveridge, Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol,

"Instant Family Man" by Marcia Amidon Lusted (Page 26-27)

Comprehension:

1. How did Frederick and Mary meet?
2. Why was Henry Perkins Olmsted renamed?
3. Where were Frederick Law Olmsted's final days spent?

Writing Activity: Write an obituary for Olmsted detailing some of his most famous works and the family he left behind.

Research: Olmsted Brothers

"An Emerald Necklace" by Cynthia Levinson (Pages 28-31)

Vocabulary: Kettlehole

Comprehension:

1. What did Boston need before new parks could be built?
2. Why do you think the linked parks were called "the Emerald Necklace?"
3. What obstacles interfered with Olmsted's vision for the parks?
4. How are the parks used today?
5. How have they changed since Olmsted's time?

Research: Boston in 1878, Back Bay fens, the Riverway, Olmsted Park, Jamaica Pond, Arnold Arboretum, Benjamin Bussey, James Arnold, Charles Sprague Sargent

"Fairsted" by Cynthia Levinson (Pages 32-34)

Comprehension:

1. What was Olmsted's opinion of suburbs?
2. What modern features did the house have and which ones were added?
3. How did Olmsted landscape his home?

Research: Fairsted, the National Park Service

"Biltmore" by Judy Haun (Pages 35-37)

Vocabulary: Rampe Douce, Pergola, Conservatory, flume

Comprehension:

1. What attracted Vanderbilt to the area?
2. Why did the project take so long?
3. What funded part of the construction?
4. Describe the variety of gardens.
5. What features allow Biltmore to be self-sustaining?

Research: Biltmore, George Washington Vanderbilt III, Richard Morris Hunt, Gifford Pinchot, U.S. Forest Service, Dr. Carl A. Schenck, Pisgah National Forest

"The White City" by Barbara Brooks Simons (Pages 38-39)

Comprehension:

1. Why did Olmsted select Jackson Park as the site for the fair?
2. Why was the fair nicknamed "The White City?"
3. Why was Wooded Island so important to the design?

Writing Activities:

1. Walt Disney is said to have modeled EPCOT Center on the White City. Write a comparison of the two designs.
2. Was it right to move the people out of Jackson Park? Write your argument.

Research: 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Daniel H. Burnham and John Root, Harry Codman, Jackson Park, "City Beautiful" movement

Activity for the Entire Issue: Complete a design for a new museum on local history. Consider where the museum will be located and the structure of the buildings along with the landscape architecture. You may either describe your plan in writing or draw the design.