

## **The Fillmore**

Neighborhoods: The Hidden Cities of San Francisco

TITLE: What is a neighborhood?

GRADES: 11-12

SUBJECT AREA(S): Language Arts, Current Events

### **LEARNING**

OBJECTIVES: In these activities, students will be asked to think about the neighborhoods in which they live, to consider what exactly makes up a neighborhood, and the current issues their neighborhood may be facing.

### **NATIONAL**

STANDARDS: This lesson addresses the following national content standards found in the McRel Standards Database: [www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks).

Grades K-12:

Civics:

11. Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

Language Arts:

Writing:

4. Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

MATERIALS:

The Fillmore, part 4 of The Neighborhoods of San Francisco  
the World Wide Web

PREPARATION:

Define: Neighborhood, Community, Demographics

Neighborhoods are part of a larger civic body: the many parts make up an entire city.

Neighborhoods have different characteristics which evolve throughout their lifetime.

- What is the difference, if any, between a neighborhood and a community?
- What is the importance of a neighborhood? Who or what determines its unique identity?
- Have there been large demographic shifts in who has lived in your neighborhood over the years? What groups have lived there? When did they move in, when did they leave, and why?

### ACTIVITY:

Think about the neighborhood in which you live. Create a portrait of your neighborhood.

- Describe your neighborhood. Where is it exactly? Who lives there? Are there people of different ages and ethnicities? Are there people who have lived there for a long time, any newcomers?
- What do you like best about your neighborhood? What do you dislike?
- What parts of it would you want to keep or change?
- What would be your ideal neighborhood?
- What changes have you seen or do you see going on now in your neighborhood?
- If there are changes going on in your neighborhood, such as development or concerns about the environment, are your neighbors fighting for or against change? Describe the issues that are being fought over. What do you think of their struggle? Why?
- What is an issue that would motivate you to join a neighborhood cause?
- Describe any organizations which have been created to assist people who live in your neighborhood with legal services, health care, or grassroots activism, etc.
- What kinds of businesses exist in your neighborhood, if any? Who owns the businesses? Are there banks, liquor stores, video stores, et cetera? How do these businesses impact the neighborhood in a positive or negative way, and why?
- Is your neighborhood noisy or quiet? Who or what causes the noise?
- What kinds of transportation do people take in your neighborhood? If there is no public transportation, such as buses, how do young people and the elderly get around? Does public transportation serve your neighborhood well? Is it on time, convenient, clean, and safe? How do you get to school? Are there streets that you consider safer than others, streets that you avoid? Please describe.

### RESEARCH:

Find a familiar neighborhood face, someone who has lived in your neighborhood for a long time, and set up an informal interview with them. (Or talk with an older family member.) How long have they lived there? What changes have they seen? Do they think the changes are positive or negative? Did they participate in the evolution of the neighborhood?

Find someone who is new to your neighborhood. What do they think about the neighborhood? Why did they move into it? Do they know any of its history? Are they going to stay awhile?

### EXTENSIONS:

- Videotape – Students can make a video of the people they interviewed for the research exercise. Include footage of landmarks described in the person's story, or insert family photographs taken in the neighborhood.
- Community mapping – Students can map out a three or four block area around their home or school, the route(s) they take to get between the two. Label each business: who and for how long have they owned the business? Students can compare and contrast maps from different neighborhoods; or, compare their map of the same neighborhood done by their fellow students.
- Volunteer at one of the community organizations that attempts to improve conditions in your neighborhood. This is a good way for students to learn more about the issues that their neighborhood is facing, and a way to learn about possible career options. Students could write a report on their participation in the community agency, complete with web research on the issues they dealt with and links to other sites dealing with similar problems.