

# Chosen Places Activity

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## Lesson Author

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## Standards and Benchmarks (see page 8)

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## Description

Place has context and meaning. In this activity, students identify a building that may be part of a larger network or institution. They research information about the building and then produce an “About Page” on the provided slide template. When, by whom, and for what purpose was the building built? This inquiry activity provides a project-based learning framework, questions to analyze findings, and an exit ticket reflection.

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## Grade Level

8-12

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## Objectives

Students will be able to

- identify a building in their community,
  - research information about the building,
  - analyze their findings,
  - present their findings to their classmates, and
  - reflect on their findings.
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## Compelling Question

Why is this building here?

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## Materials

- PowerPoint slides with template
  - Handout 1, one copy for each student or pair of students
  - Handouts 2 and 3, one copy of each for the teacher to use as visuals
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## Procedure

1. Teachers: After students have completed the analysis questions on *Handout 1: Activity Information Gathering Framework*, compile their slides. Instruct students to present their building analyses to the class. Have each student answer the exit ticket reflection questions on Handout 1 in either oral or written form.

## Handout 1: Activity Information Gathering Framework

**Directions:** Students may work individually or in pairs to complete the following.

1. Identify a building that has significance in your community or state that is part of a larger network or institution. Examples include a federal or state government, library system, education, or religious building. Pick a building for which you would like to find out why it is where it is.
2. Gather the facts about the building using the following questions:
  - What is it called?
  - Where is it?
  - When was it built?
  - Why was this location selected? (\*Higher level)
  - Who built it? (\*Higher level)
3. Are there other locations in this network or part of this institution? If so, how many and where?
4. Use the slide template to create an “About Page” for your chosen building using the information gathered.

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### Analysis Questions

**Students:** After completing the fact-gathering process and PowerPoint slide, write a paragraph about your building and incorporate one or more of the answers to the following questions that best apply to your building:

1. Is the purpose the building was created for still needed? If the purpose is still needed but not conducted in this building, where is it done and why?
2. What does the building say about your town/community at the time that it was built? What was the population? What were the main industries?
3. How has your town/community changed since the building was built?
4. Is there controversy about this building or was there in the past? Were there members of the community that supported or opposed this building?

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### Exit Ticket Reflection

1. Did any of your findings surprise you? If so, what?
2. What did you learn?
3. Was there information you wanted to know but could not find?

## Handout 2: Places Bibliography

### Resources for Brainstorming

Here are a handful of pages that can help you and your students discover what buildings may be in your town or city. For help finding information about a building you already know exists, please see “Resources for Finding a Building” in this activity’s *Handout 3: Additional Resources*.

#### [USA.gov A-Z Index of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies](#)

USA.gov, part of the U.S. General Services Administration, is the official guide to federal government information and services. This page provides an alphabetical list of federal agencies that is also searchable by keyword, so you can find the list of agencies that have offices or functions related to “environment” or “Native American” topics, to name just two examples.

#### [U.S. General Services Administration Historic Preservation](#)

This part of the U.S. federal government’s network of web pages includes the history of the General Services Administration’s stewardship of federal government buildings since its founding in 1949. The site provides a [building lookup](#) tool for historic government buildings across the U.S.

#### [National Park Service National Register of Historic Places](#)

The National Park Service, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, has maintained the National Register of Historic Places since 1966. There are now nearly 100,000 properties on the list. The Register includes both buildings that are part of a network, like those used in this activity, and “standalone” historical buildings that may be of interest to you and your students.

#### [dp.la, the Digital Public Library of America](#)

DPLA, a collaborative catalogue of digitized content in libraries, museums, and archives across the U.S. (including the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis) allows users to keyword search many organizations at once. The site features many history-focused [online exhibitions](#) and [primary source sets](#) on a wide variety of national, regional, and local topics.

**Handout 3: Additional Resources** (page 1 of 3)**Digital History and Mapping Tools**

Here are a handful of resources that may be of interest to teachers interested in sophisticated visual presentations of the information uncovered in this activity. These links are provided for informational purposes only, and to the best of our knowledge there is no charge to use these tools. This [online guide](#) from the San Jose State University libraries includes *many* kinds of digital history tools, including mapping and timeline tools.

[Historypin](#)

Historypin.org, which partners with organizations including the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, is a collaborative mapping and map annotation tool that allows groups to connect information about the history of a place with a visual map of that place. Historypin, a not-for-profit organization, provides how-to videos for using Historypin, including for classroom use, [here](#).

[National Geographic MapMaker](#)

This map annotation tool from National Geographic magazine allows users to choose from a variety of maps in its database and annotate them with notes, drawings, map pins and location markers, and more. Their “[help](#)” section has a number of how-to videos. Find this and other classroom resources at their [Education](#) page.

[Google Earth for Education](#)

Google’s mapping tools include the ability to create complex maps with place markers, photos, text annotations, and more. You can see examples of educational projects made with Google Earth [here](#).

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**Resources for Finding a Building**

This section provides links to specific agencies and organizations that may have (or have had) buildings in your town.

**U.S. Government Offices**

These links are a starting point for those who may not realize that many federal agencies had or have regional offices across the country. Consider also looking in the *Handout 2: Places Bibliography* “Resources for Brainstorming” list for other agencies that may have had offices in your area.

- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [Regional Offices](#)
  - Photos of [different buildings used for BLS headquarters](#) in Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Service Centers](#)
- U.S. Mint [Facilities](#) (\*This site is middle-grades appropriate.)
- Government Publishing Office (GPO) and Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP): Federal Depository Libraries are public, private, and university libraries across the U.S. that agree to make access to their federal government documents free to the public. That federal government information is published by the GPO, which has produced everything from the official records of Congress to special research reports, since 1861.

### Handout 3: Additional Resources (page 2 of 3)

- [FDLP and GPO History](#)
- [Interactive map](#) of FDLP libraries
- [GPO Office Locations](#)
- Bureau of Engraving and Printing [locations](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency [regional offices](#) (with [addresses](#))
- Health and Human Services [Regional Offices](#)
- National Archives [offices](#) and presidential libraries: Their [history and mission](#) page includes some photos of the regional offices and records centers.

#### **U.S. Post Offices**

This is a [National Trust site](#) on Historic Post Office Buildings and a related [story map](#) site documenting 20 specific post office buildings. The story map's introduction provides a brief overview.

#### **U.S. Federal Reserve System**

- [List and map of Reserve Bank and branch cities](#)
- [Reserve Bank Organization Committee archives](#), 1913-1914
- [Appeals](#) from cities that were not chosen in 1914 to be Federal Reserve cities

#### **Land Grant Universities**

- [Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities](#)
- [Map](#) from the USDA
- For historical context concerning which Native American tribes lived on the lands that became land grants, [this investigative article](#) and embedded map provides an overview on Indigenous territories appropriated in the Morrill Act.

#### **Military Bases**

- This Department of Defense list of military installations [in the U.S.](#) can be filtered by service and browsed by state.
- This Library of Congress image search for "[military bases](#)" includes historic maps and illustrations.
- A U.S. Army history site on [naming and renaming](#) of Army posts includes primary sources dating back to 1917.

#### **Carnegie Libraries**

- This National Park Service [lesson](#) on the Carnegie libraries includes the original application towns submitted in their quest to get a library. The "Carnegie Libraries of Washington Thematic Resource" mentioned on the NPS site can be found in PDF form [here](#). The "Thematic Resource" may be too dense for students but can provide valuable context for teachers.

### Handout 3: Additional Resources (page 3 of 3)

- DPLA has an online [exhibition](#) on the Carnegie libraries.
- Library of Congress has a [research guide](#) on Carnegie libraries, using the Chronicling America digital collection of historic newspapers to link to specific local news articles.

#### ***Union Stations, Penn Stations, and Other Train “Terminals”***

These commonly named buildings were built and run by rail companies, so they do not have a central source for their histories.

- Wikipedia [list](#) of Union Stations
- Some stations have their own website with history, like Washington, D.C.’s [Union Station](#).
- Some stations are in the GSA historic buildings site listed above, like Tacoma, WA’s [Union Station](#).
- The [Barriger National Railroad Library](#), part of the St. Louis Mercantile Library special collections housed at the University of Missouri St. Louis, has a large collection of materials about the history of railroads.

## **Standards and Benchmarks**

### **C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards**

#### **History: Change, Continuity, and Context**

- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.