

Morris Jumel Mansion

What Was Life Like in the Past? Pre-Visit Activity

Grade: K - 3

New York State Learning Standards: SS K.1, SS K.8, SS 1.8, SS 2.9, SS 3.8b

Objectives:

In this activity, students will gain an understanding of what life was like in New York during its founding compared to modern times. They will learn about historical methods of transportation, communication, food, toys, and clothing and illustrate these differences creatively. This activity will foster connections between art, history, and reading, as well as collaboration to create a class picture book.

Materials:

- A prepared passage about the founding of New York and life during that time (see attached).
- Strips of paper with pre-printed sentences or sections from the passage.
- Cardstock.
- Construction paper (cut to fit three-quarters of the cardstock).
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers.
- Pencils and erasers.
- Glue sticks.
- Binder or binder rings.
- Three-hole punch.

Procedure:

Preparation (before the activity):

1. Three-hole punch each sheet of cardstock to prepare for book assembly.
2. Print and cut the passage into manageable sections or sentences. Attach or write each section on a separate sheet of cardstock.

During the activity:

1. Introduction and Reading:

- Begin by reading the passage aloud to the class. Encourage students to listen carefully and imagine what life was like during the founding of New York. You can use the attached presentation as a visual aid if you wish.

- Use prompts to discuss differences between the past and present, such as:
 - “What would it be like to travel in a horse-drawn carriage instead of a car?”
 - “How do you think people communicated without phones or computers?”

2. Discussion:

- After reading, discuss what they learned. Questions might include:
 - “What do you think was the hardest part about living back then?”
 - “What would you like about living in the past?”
 - “What did people in the past have that we do not have today?”

3. Assigning Sections:

- Hand out pre-printed strips of the passage, one to each student. Depending on class size, students can work individually or in pairs.

4. Illustrating:

- Have students sketch an illustration of the sentence or section they received on construction paper. Remind them to think about the colors, styles, and tools that might have been used during that time.

5. Final Artwork:

- Students finalize their drawings and color them in.

Assembling the Book:

- Glue the students’ illustrations onto cardstock pages alongside the corresponding text strip.
- Assemble the pages in order and secure them with binder rings or a binder.
- Add a title page and contributor page, and have students sign their names.

Conclusion:

Once the book is complete, review it as a class, reflecting on the differences between past and present life. Display the book in the classroom or share it with the Morris-Jumel Mansion staff during the visit as a class-created artifact. This activity will help students appreciate history through creative expression and collaboration.

What Was Life Like in the Past?

A long, long time ago, before New York City had tall buildings and cars, it was a small town called New Amsterdam. People came from far away on big ships to make a new home. They worked hard every day, and life was very different from how we live now. Let's take a look!

Transportation:

Today, we ride in cars, buses, and trains. Back then, people walked, rode horses, or used carriages pulled by horses to get around.

Communication:

Now, we can call or text our friends and family. In old New York, people wrote letters with pens made from feathers and sent them by messenger.

Housing:

We live in big apartment buildings or houses. Long ago, people lived in small wooden or stone houses with just a few rooms and no electricity.

Clothing:

Today, we wear all kinds of clothes from stores. Back then, people wore clothes made by hand. Men wore jackets and breeches, and women wore long dresses.

Toys:

Now, we have stuffed animals, video games, and toy cars. Back then, kids played with wooden dolls, marbles, and hoops they rolled down the street.

Food:

We get food from grocery stores or restaurants. Long ago, families grew vegetables in gardens and baked their bread at home.

Laundry:

Today, we use washing machines and dryers. Back then, people washed their clothes by hand in big tubs and dried them outside.

Water:

We can turn on a faucet to get water. Long ago, people carried water from wells or rivers in buckets.

Light:

Now, we flip a switch to turn on the lights. Back then, people used candles or oil lamps to light their homes at night.

Roads:

Our streets are made of smooth pavement. Back then, streets were dirt or cobblestones, and they were bumpy and muddy when it rained.

Schools:

We go to big schools with desks, books, and computers. Long ago, schools were small, and children wrote on slates with chalk.

Daily Routines:

Today, we wake up with alarm clocks, eat breakfast, and go to school. Back then, people woke up when the sun rose, ate food they made themselves, and spent most of the day working or learning at home.

Even though life in old New York was very different, families still worked hard, played, and helped each other—just like we do now! When you visit the Morris-Jumel Mansion, you'll get to see how people lived back then and imagine what it was like to be a kid in old New York!