



Curating the City: Wilshire Blvd.

Lesson 4: Elks Club/Park Plaza Hotel (607 S. Park View St.)

What You Need to Know:

- Grade Level: All Levels
- Curriculum Connections: English—Language Arts, History—Social Science
- Kids' Guide Correlation: Use this lesson in conjunction with page 9 of the Guide. As students explore the Parks District, use this study of the Elks Club (now called the Park Plaza Hotel) to lead students to a deeper understanding of the role of clubs and gathering places in twentieth-century society. You can use this activity as a complement to a student visit to the Elks Club. You can also use this activity as a way to help students think about the role of architecture in bringing people together.
- Website Correlation: Go to laconservancy.org/wilshire. Under “Explore Wilshire Blvd.,” use the keyword search to find the page for Elks Club/Park Plaza Hotel for photos and background information. For photos and background on two other clubs on Wilshire, see the location pages for the Ebell of Los Angeles and Scottish Rite Masonic Temple.

Focus Questions:

- What was the purpose of private clubs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?
- How do people gather for a common purpose today?
- How does a building's exterior reveal its purpose?
- How can a building's exterior create links with the past?

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to describe how the use of the Elks Club has changed over the years.
- Students will be able to explain how the building's design reveals its purpose and creates links to the past.
- Students will be able to discuss the role of clubs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Assessment:

Write a detailed description of a club that you belong to, and create an appropriate design for a club building.

Essential Vocabulary:

- Sculpture
- Lodge



Materials:

- Lesson 4 worksheet
- Plain paper
- Pencils
- Lined paper
- Colored pencils or markers

Procedure

Motivation:

Ask students to think about places in Los Angeles where people gather for a specific purpose. They may suggest temples or churches, gyms, community centers, or even shopping malls. Ask students to discuss the characteristics that these gathering spaces share. What makes them appealing to visit? Why do people go there? How can you tell the purpose of each building just by looking at its exterior? Tell students that they will be looking closely at the Elks Club, an important gathering place in Los Angeles during the early twentieth century.

Making Connections:

Ask students to share their own experiences of belonging to a specific group. Do they belong to clubs? Teams? Religious organizations? Ask students to discuss the advantages of belonging to an organized group. How does being part of a community help an individual? How can a club help the community?

Guided Instruction:

1. Distribute the Lesson 4 worksheet, and have students read the descriptive paragraph about the Elks Club (now called the Park Plaza Hotel). Then share some close-up pictures of the building.
2. As students examine the pictures of the exterior and sculptures, challenge them to identify unique details. Ask them to discuss how this building reveals its purpose in its design. Encourage students to see how the reference to characters from ancient history might “tell” people that the club is old and established. Point out that a building with many details and built from expensive materials sends the message that the building – and the club – plans to be around for a long time.
3. Invite students to consider how this building has been put to multiple uses throughout the years. Help students see that though the building’s owners changed, the building itself still functioned as a gathering place, serving as a YMCA, as a hotel, and as a rock club. Ask students to consider how this building has been preserved. What makes this building important? What would be lost if it were gone?
4. How could a building like this be “re-purposed” in the future? Invite students to think about other ways that the Elks Club building could function as a gathering space. Point out the building’s location in the Westlake district, near a densely populated Central American immigrant community. What kind of gathering space would serve the needs of nearby



residents?

5. Ask students to think about a club or group that they belong to or would like to belong to. Have them write a detailed piece describing their club. Then direct students to design a club building. Challenge students to imagine exterior details that reveal the building's purpose. Have students draw their designs on poster paper and illustrate in color.

Assessment:

Have students write descriptions of clubs and create designs of club buildings.

Reflection/Critical Thinking:

1. Do you think the way people have joined clubs over the years has changed? If so, in what way?
2. What happens when members of a community don't join clubs? What are the possible consequences?
3. What makes the Elks Club/Park Plaza Hotel a good example of a gathering place?
4. Why is the building worth preserving?

Enrichment Opportunities:

- Have students examine two other clubs on Wilshire, the Ebell and the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple. Challenge them to write a comparative review of the three buildings. How are they similar? How are they different? What makes each one successful?
- Challenge students to find out more about the history of important organizations in the United States, such as the YMCA, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the League of Women Voters, and the Masons. Point out that many of these clubs came to be during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Invite students to consider the factors in American society that led people to start forming these organizations.
- Point out that many organizations come into being to serve immigrant groups. They help new Americans integrate in their community as well as maintain connections with people from their home countries. Have students find out more about the various cultural groups that have immigrated to California over the years.

Worksheet Answers:

Responses will vary.

California Standards:

English-Language Arts (Writing):

- 2.1.0 Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea.
- 3.1.1 Create a single paragraph.
- 3.2.2 Write descriptions that use concrete sensory details to present and support unified impressions of things or experiences.



- 4.1.1 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements.
- 4.1.2 Create multiple-paragraph compositions.
- 5.1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions.
- 5.1.6 Edit and revise manuscripts to improve the meaning and focus of writing by adding, deleting, consolidating, clarifying, and rearranging words and sentences.
- 5.2.3 Write research reports about important ideas, issues, or events by using the following guidelines:
 - a. Frame questions that direct the investigation.
 - b. Establish a controlling idea or topic.
 - c. Develop the topic with simple facts, details, examples, and explanations.
- 6.1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions.
- 6.1.6 Revise writing to improve the organization and consistency of ideas within and between paragraphs.
- 6.2.2 Write expository compositions (e.g., description, explanation, comparison and contrast, problem and solution).
- 7.1.1 Create an organizational structure that balances all aspects of the composition and uses effective transitions between sentences to unify important ideas.
- 7.1.2 Support all statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.
- 7.1.3 Use strategies of note taking, outlining, and summarizing to impose structure on composition.
- 7.2.4 Write persuasive compositions.
- 8.1.1 Create compositions that establish a controlling impression, have a coherent thesis, and end with a clear and well-supported conclusion.
- 8.1.2 Establish coherence within and among paragraphs through effective transitions, parallel structures, and similar writing techniques.
- 8.2.4 Write persuasive compositions.
- 9.1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.



- 9.1.2 Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, and the active rather than the passive voice.
- 9.2.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports.
- 11.1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse (e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments.
- 11.1.3 Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained, persuasive, and sophisticated way and support them with precise and relevant examples.

History-Social Science:

- 2.2.1 Differentiate between things that happened long ago and things that happened yesterday.
- 2.2.2 Compare and contrast their daily lives with those of their parents, grandparents, and/or guardians.
- 3.4.2 Discuss the importance of public virtue and the role of citizens, including how to participate in a classroom, in the community, and in civic life.
- 4.4.3 Discuss immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900, including the diverse composition of those who came; the countries of origin and their relative locations; and conflicts and accords among the diverse groups (e.g., the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act).
- 8.12.5 Examine the location and effects of urbanization, renewed immigration, and industrialization (e.g., the effects on social fabric of cities, wealth and economic opportunity, the conservation movement).
- 8.12.7 Identify the new sources of large-scale immigration and the contributions of immigrants to the building of cities and the economy; explain the ways in which new social and economic patterns encouraged assimilation of newcomers into the mainstream amidst growing cultural diversity; and discuss the new wave of nativism.
- 10.1.1 Analyze the similarities and differences in Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman views of law, reason and faith, and duties of the individual.
- 10.3.3 Describe the growth of population, rural to urban migration, and growth of cities associated with the Industrial Revolution.



- 10.3.6 Analyze the emergence of Capitalism as a dominant economic pattern and the responses to it, including Utopianism, Social Democracy, Socialism, and Communism.
- 10.6.4 Discuss the influence of World War I on literature, art, and intellectual life in the West (e.g., Pablo Picasso, the "lost generation" of Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway).
- 11.3.1 Describe the contributions of various religious groups to American civic principles and social reform movements (e.g., civil and human rights, individual responsibility and the work ethic, antimonarchy and self-rule, worker protection, family-centered communities).
- 11.4.5 Analyze the political, economic, and social ramifications of World War I on the home front.
- 11.8.8 Discuss forms of popular culture, with emphasis on their origins and geographic diffusion (e.g., jazz and other forms of popular music, professional sports, architectural and artistic styles).
- 12.2.1 Discuss the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured (e.g., freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition, privacy).
- 12.2.4 Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.
- 12.3.1 Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes.



Student Worksheet

Name _____



Elks Club (Tom Zimmerman Collection)



Detail of Elks Club

What makes a building a good place for people to gather? This is a question that architects try to answer whenever they design large spaces for many people. From temples and churches, to shopping malls, to sports stadiums, the challenge is the same: how do you create a good space where people can come together?

Take a close look at the Elks Club. When this structure opened in 1925, it was a gathering space for a men's club called the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. The Elks got together for fun as well as to plan charity projects to help people in need.

The Elks Club had 165 hotel rooms on the upper seven stories and huge rooms for parties and dinners. In the late 1960s, the Elks stopped meeting there. But the building continued to be a meeting spot, serving as a YMCA. This was a good use for it since it has a full gym, an Olympic-sized pool, and racquetball courts! Since then, the building has been a retirement hotel for senior citizens, a club where punk rock bands played, and a filming location for many movies.

When the architects designed the building for the Elks Club, they included details on the building's exterior that would give passersby the sense that this building was old, impressive, and part of many years of tradition. The sculptures on the front of the building include ancient Roman figures, figures from Assyria or Babylonia (modern-day Iraq), as well as World War I soldiers.



REFLECT AND WRITE.

Your task is to think about a club or an organization that you might like to belong to. It could be a gathering of people with something in common, such as an interest in painting or bicycling, or a group that wishes to help other people. Use the guiding questions below to take some notes about your club.

1. What is the name of your club?

2. Who belongs to the club?

3. How often do club members gather?

4. Where do club members gather?

5. What is the purpose of the club? How does it help the community?



6. What do club members do when they come together?

7. What do you like about this club?

8. What would you change?

9. Other information:

Use these notes to create a detailed essay about your club.



DESIGN IT!

Design a new building for your club. Use a piece of poster paper and colored markers to create a detailed drawing. Be sure to include details that will give passersby information about what happens inside the building.