



## Marvel Comics Walking Tour of New York City

This activity takes students on a tour of New York City to many of the sites featured in the Marvel Comic's Super Heroes series. Through this tour students get an idea of how stories are developed and how familiar people, places and things become part of even the most over-the-top fanciful stories. In addition students will be called on to use map reading, visual organization and planning skills to develop the route for their walk.

### Activity

Present your students with maps of New York City and have them locate selected Marvel Comic sites from the list below that they would like to explore. The sites they select will become a tour of the City.

### New York City Sites That Appear in Marvel Comics

The Bowery  
City Hall  
The East Village  
Bleeker Street  
187 Chrystie Street  
666 Fifth Avenue  
East Thirty-ninth Street and Second Avenue  
Empire State University --- New York University  
Yancy Street --- Delancey Street  
Baxter Building/Four Freedoms Plaza (42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Madison Avenue)  
Chrysler Building (405 Lexington Avenue and East Forty-second Street)  
Empire State Building (350 Fifth Avenue between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets)  
United Nations Building (760 United Nations Plaza)  
The Gem Theatre (42<sup>nd</sup> Street between Broad way and Eighth Avenue)  
Hell's Kitchen  
Madison Square Garden  
Rockefeller Center  
New York Public Library (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street)  
Times Square  
Central Park  
The Frick Collection  
The Solomon Guggenheim Museum  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
American Museum of Natural History  
Columbia University  
Brooklyn Bridge  
Statue of Liberty

Empire State Building • 350 Fifth Avenue • New York • NY • 10118  
TEL: 212/279-9777 or 888/SKYRIDE • FAX 212/299-4932  
Myron D. Baer, Director of Business Development, [mbaer@skylinenyc.com](mailto:mbaer@skylinenyc.com)  
Direct 212/299-4901



After the sites are selected, have students use street maps of New York City to plan the precise route of their tour. Don't forget to consider how you will get to each site --- via foot power, subway or bus.

Assign different students or student teams the responsibility of describing what happened in the different comics at each of these locations. When you arrive at each of the selected locations have the assigned students/student teams tell the story (stories) that took place at this location.

At each site have students decide if they think the location is a good one for the story that took place here and why they feel as they do.

Have students compare the actual site to the depiction of it in the Super Heroes comic and describe the differences.

Have your students decide if they agree or disagree with the following statement:

*Super Heroes represent the potential within every individual to become extraordinary.*

Peter Sanders, author of *The Marvel Comics Guide to New York City*.

### **Back In the Classroom**

When you return to your classroom have students complete an outline or a storyboard for a Super Hero comic using sites and characters from their own lives

### **Materials Needed**

Marvel Comics for your ride to New York Here is a site for the Marvel Comics catalogue

<http://www.marvel.com/catalog/>

Maps of New York City

Cameras



## Ladies' Mile

This activity focuses on the creation of the country's first department stores. It takes students on a walking tour of New York City's *Ladies' Mile*, to discover the changes in what was once a most fashionable section of the city. Students must use their skills of visual literacy and historical information to locate the city's built environment of the past as it is in the city today. Students are asked to decide for themselves which they find more appealing, the architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century or the architecture of today. The activity also addresses issues of historic preservation.

### Background Information

During the decades after the Civil War many changes occurred in New York City. Among these was a big increase in the city's commerce which caused the commercial areas to intrude northward into the previously mainly residential areas of the city between Union Square and Madison Square along Broadway and over to Sixth Avenue. As it just so happened, it was the custom for upper class women to go out alone without a chaperone **only** for the purpose of going shopping. Shopping was considered a necessity but it also served as an acceptable diversion for the ladies. As a result this area of the city soon became a prime shopping area for upper class ladies. This led to the rise of many specialty stores in the area and to the creation of **the department store** --- a new concept at the time. This area of the city soon became referred to as **Ladies' Mile**.

### Activity

Lead your students on a stroll up what used to be referred to as *Ladies Mile*. The purpose of your walk is to try to locate this past period in history on the streets of today's city.

*Ladies Mile* ran roughly from 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, at the top of Union Square over to Sixth Avenue with a few dips and curves. But we're suggesting you begin exploring a bit south of here. Pursue the following route and see what history you and your students discover:

- **Broadway and 9<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This was the location of A.T. Stewarts Department Store the very first department store.
- **785 Broadway at 10<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the building that housed Mathew Brady's studio where he took his famous daguerreotype of Abraham Lincoln.
- **801 Broadway at 11<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the original location of the James McCreery & Co. Dry Goods Store.
- **574 Sixth Avenue at 14<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the original home of the Knickerbocker Jewelry Company.

Empire State Building • 350 Fifth Avenue • New York • NY • 10118

TEL: 212/299-9777 or 888/SKYRIDE • FAX 212/299-4932

Myron D. Baer, Director of Business Development, [mbaer@skylinenyc.com](mailto:mbaer@skylinenyc.com)

Direct 212/299-4901

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- **Sixth Avenue at 18<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This is the original site of the Siegel-Cooper Dry Goods Store. You'll find the B. Altman Building close by as well.
- **881-887 Broadway at 19<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This was the site of the Arnold Constable Building.
- **889-891 Broadway at 19<sup>th</sup> Street** --- You'll find the original home of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, a leading silversmith of the time.
- **901 Broadway at 20<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This is the original location of the Lord and Taylor Store.
- **28 East 20<sup>th</sup> Street** --- This is the birthplace of President Theodore Roosevelt.
- **200 Fifth Avenue at West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street** --- This is above *Ladies' Mile* but we thought you would enjoy seeing the Sidewalk Clock at this location.

As your students stroll the area, have them make the following observations:

Look for large windows, especially on the second floor that were intended to allow passengers of the elevated train to see into the shops.

Look for mansard roofs that were intended to grab the attention of the ladies strolling by.

Look for elaborate cornice work on the outside of the buildings intended to attract the attention of ladies strolling by or the attention of riders on the EI.

Look for cast-iron facades and balconies on the buildings which were very popular in the day.

Look for limestone, granite and red brick.

For each site your students discover, have them consider and discuss the following:

Whether the building on the site today is historic and of the *Ladies' Mile* period or contemporary.

The current use (s) of the original building.

The current use (s) of the new building erected on this spot.

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Noting the character of the neighborhood, which fits the character better brownstones or tower buildings?

What kind of building would they erect on these streets today?

Have your students photograph all the buildings they like along *Ladies' Mile*.

#### **When You Return to the Classroom:**

- Create a gallery of *Ladies' Mile* photographs.
- Have your students research what the ladies shopping along *Ladies' Mile* were actually purchasing.
- Have your students research the development of the shopping areas in their home community.
- Have your students research dress patterns from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Purchase a pattern and have **every student** sew an apron.
- Have students research daguerreotypes.

#### **Materials Needed in New York City**

Maps of the City of New York  
Cameras

#### **Good Website About Department Stores and Ladies' Mile**

1. <http://www.departmentstorehistory.net/disc.htm> --- This site is a blog about the history of department stores all over the country. It's fascinating reading.
2. <http://www.columbia.edu/~ktj1/NYC/pics/wanamakers.jpg> --- This is an historic photograph of Wanamaker's Department Store in New York City.
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/html/newsletter/may2006.html> --- This is part of the New York City Government site. It has a good list of books and articles about the history of the department store in the city.
4. <http://www.opuspublishing.com/nycguide/stores/> --- This is the site for Opus Publishing. Here you can find information about some of New York's earliest department stores.
5. <http://www.oldandsold.com/articles14/new-york-34.shtml> --- This is an article about New York's early department stores that was originally published in 1921. It has an incredible amount of information however it does have some slight discrepancies with other information.
6. <http://www.placematters.net/flash/home.htm> --- This is an interesting site with information about many of New York's buildings.

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