Chapter 3

PUBLIC SPACES
PUBLIC SPACES

Promoting Diversity and Democracy

Design Challenge:
We need places to hang out in our cities where EVERYONE is welcome. Help us design public spaces for everyday life that are entertaining, interesting, attractive, unique, inviting, fun, and unusual.

Union Square in San Francisco, California.
DESIGN CHALLENGE ASSIGNMENT

CREATE A PUBLIC SPACE IN EACH OF YOUR CITY’S DISTRICTS

1. On either graph paper or a blank sheet of paper, sketch a “bird’s-eye view”*** of your public spaces with as many details as possible. If you can’t draw certain details, describe them with words. Draw lightly in pencil (so that you can easily erase parts you change your mind about without having to start all over again). Don’t forget to give each public space a name.

![Sketches of public spaces](by Fausto, by Lesly, by Mario)

***A “bird’s-eye view” is what it looks like from above—like a floor plan.

2. Sketch each public space exactly where it should be located on a copy of your city map (lightly in pencil so that you can easily erase parts you change your mind about without having to start all over again).

![Sketches of public spaces](by Jacqueline, by Sofia, by Salma)

3. Add the boundaries and names of the districts you created in the last assignment.

4. Use fine-tipped markers and/or colored pencils to finish your designs.

***Teacher’s Notes: The Project for Public Spaces is a great resource for ideas. The website has lots of pictures and information related to public spaces. [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

EXTRA CHALLENGE

Draw the “bird’s-eye view” plan of your public space to scale.*

*If you don’t know what “scale” means, look it up!!!
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SHOPPING MALL AND A PUBLIC SPACE?

A shopping mall is privately owned. Its main purpose is to sell merchandise to make money.

Public spaces are not businesses. The main purpose of a public space is to provide a place to hang out for everyone, free of charge.

Boston, Massachusetts (USA).
KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT PUBLIC SPACES

EVENYONE IS WELCOME
The cultural identity and social diversity of residents is reflected in the space’s users and design.

NO MONEY NEEDS TO BE SPENT TO ENJOY IT
There is no admission charge. You do not have to buy anything.

OUTDOOR SPACES ARE FOR EVERYDAY LIFE
Sitting, eating, reading, socializing, playing, resting, people-watching, entertainment, education, special events (such as shows, community celebrations, farmers markets, and public speeches), etc...

***Although public spaces can be indoors, urban designers are mostly interested in the outdoor spaces of a city—between the buildings.

PUBLIC SPACES CAN BE GREEN
- Public spaces should integrate greenery and nature into their designs.
- Public spaces should be central focal points of districts. They should be accessible to everyone by foot, bicycle and public transit.

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TYPES OF PUBLIC SPACES

Plazas, squares, and parks are the most common types of public spaces. They are often located at a major crossroads (the intersection of two busy streets), at the end of a main street, or adjacent to a special natural feature like a beach or river.

Some public spaces are very unique. Millennium Park in Chicago has unusual fountains and artwork. Outdoor stairs are popular places to hang out with friends in Rome, Italy (Spanish Steps), and Vancouver, Canada (at the Vancouver Art Gallery). In Ottawa, Canada, the Rideau Canal becomes an outdoor ice rink each winter, while in Paris a riverfront street is covered with sand and converted into a beach each summer.

Millennium Park in Chicago, Illinois.
BRYANT PARK (NEW YORK CITY)

- Park Map
- Children's Painting Area
- Chess and Backgammon Corner
- Magic Show Advertisement
- Outdoor Movie Screen
- Reading Area

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MORE PUBLIC SPACES...

Exhibit at Museum of Madrid (Spain)  Empty lot converted into a park in Long Beach, California (USA). The back of the car is lined with benches!

Jackson Square in New Orleans, Louisiana (USA)  Union Square San Francisco, California (USA)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of as many activities as you can that can take place in a public plaza.

2. What are some public spaces you like in your city or another city you know about? What do you like about these spaces?

3. What are some public spaces you don’t like? What makes these spaces undesirable?
LANGUAGE ARTS EXTENSIONS

WRITING
Write a paragraph about your city’s public spaces.

TOPIC SENTENCE
Define public space.

DETAILS
Describe the public spaces you designed. Make each one sound attractive, exciting, unusual, interesting, and fun.

CONCLUDING SENTENCE
Explain how your city’s public spaces will be kid-friendly and green.

WORD WORK

**Public Spaces:** Places used by the public for recreation in everyday life, especially to socialize or hang out. Places to stage public events and community celebrations.

**Vocabulary**
- public
- private
- democracy
- multiculturalism
- diversity
- space
- plaza
- square
- park
- recreation
- socialize

**Teacher’s Note:** You can adapt this page to meet your grade level standards and classroom needs. Ideas include putting the words in alphabetical order, synonyms/antonyms, definitions, sentences, singular/plural, parts of speech, using words in prepositional phrases/similes/sentences with conjunctions, syllables, prefixes/suffixes/word origins/word families.