

Philadelphia: The Great Experiment—Grid Webisode

Comparing Maps of the Philadelphia Grid: Ideal vs. Reality

TEACHER KEY & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This activity is designed to be a hands-on follow-up to the Grid webisode. To complete this sheet, students will need either digital or hard copy access to [Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia](#), [Philadelphia, 1776](#), and [Philadelphia Downtown](#) maps. Before students begin the map work, help orient them to the maps by putting the “Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia” map in a vertical (portrait) position and the 1776 map in a horizontal (landscape) position. This activity is conducive to students working in pairs. Note: either before screening the webisode or after completing this sheet, you may want to ask your students to sketch out their layout for an ideal city.

To answer the following questions, you will compare Thomas Holme's *Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia* (the plans he laid out with William Penn's approval in 1682) to a map of Philadelphia created in 1776.

1. Holme's plan envisioned a city that spread out symmetrically from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River. The 1776 map, however, indicates a much greater concentration of development close to the Delaware River and nothing at all beyond Eighth Street. Furthermore, lots are divided into small and large parcels without regard to symmetry. How do you explain these discrepancies?

Philadelphia was a port city and much of the early economic activity centered on the Delaware River. Much of the land to the west of Eighth Street was not cleared until much later. Some people (the poor, the enslaved) lived on tiny lots. In short, the Penn/Holmes plan was an idealistic vision on what the city *should* develop; the 1776 map depicts how the city *did* develop in its first hundred years.

2. The major thoroughfare dividing Philadelphia into north and south is called High Street on Holme's map, but it is labeled as "High Street or Market Street" in the 1776 map. What might this tell you about the early history of this street?

High Street was the name of the main thoroughfare in most English towns. Because market stalls lined the center of this street in the city's early history, it was given the nickname "Market Street". This became the street's official name in 1858, the same year that market stalls were removed from the center of the street.

3. Thomas Holme's labels the Schuylkill River as the Scool Kill River. Why do you think these spellings are so different?

"Schuylkill" is a Dutch word meaning "hidden river." The Dutch spelling would have been unfamiliar to an Englishman. 17th century spelling was not standardized.

Philadelphia: The Great Experiment—Grid Webisode

Now, use a modern day “Philadelphia Downtown Map” to compare Holme’s vision to current reality. Like the 1776 map, it should be viewed horizontally.

4. In Holme's “Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia,” he shows five squares, one empty square in the center of the map and four indicated with trees, each in a different quadrant of the city. Looking at the *Philadelphia Downtown* map, determine the current names of each of these squares. (Hint: other than the square in the center, they are each labeled in blue.)

Center: **City Hall**

Northwest: **Logan Circle**

Southwest: **Rittenhouse Square**

Southeast: **Washington Square**

Northeast: **Franklin Square**

5. Holmes' map shows all streets in an orderly grid pattern. In the northwest quadrant of the *Philadelphia Downtown* map, however, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway is at an angle that disrupts the grid. Why do you think such a street was built? What kinds of institutions are on or near this street?

The Parkway was built in 1917 to beautify the city. It runs from City Hall to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Numerous museums and other major institutions (e.g. Free Library of Philadelphia, Moore College of Art) are located on or near the Parkway. It was modeled on the Champs-Élysées, a major thoroughfare in Paris. (Note: Answers will vary.)

6. Notice that the streets running from north to south are numbered. The numbers indicate how many blocks a street is from which body of water?

The Delaware River

7. Most of Philadelphia's streets that run from east to west are named for trees. Why do you think that, as a Quaker, William Penn preferred to name streets for trees rather than for people?

Quakers believe that there is that of God in every person and do not seek to elevate certain people above others.

8. The original city went from Vine Street in the north to South Street. Which three major north/south streets (streets that run all the way from the Delaware to the Schuylkill River) are *not* named for trees.

South Street- Although Penn wanted it to be called Cedar Street, it was the southern border of the city until 1854.

Race Street- In the city's early days, horse racing took place along what was meant to be called Sassafras Street.

Arch Street- The original name was Mulberry Street. Until 1720, an arched bridge crossed Mulberry Street along Front Street and the name stuck.

Philadelphia: The Great Experiment—Grid Webisode

Comparing Maps of the Philadelphia Grid: Ideal vs. Reality

To answer the following questions, you will compare Thomas Holme's *Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia* (the plans he laid out with William Penn's approval in 1682) to a map of Philadelphia created in 1776.

1. Holme's plan envisioned a city that spread out symmetrically from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River. The 1776 map, however, indicates a much greater concentration of development close to the Delaware River and nothing at all beyond Eighth Street. Furthermore, lots are divided into small and large parcels without regard to symmetry. How do you explain these discrepancies?

2. The major thoroughfare dividing Philadelphia into north and south is called High Street on Holme's map, but it is labeled as "High Street or Market Street" in the 1776 map. What might this tell you about the early history of this street?

3. Thomas Holme's labels the Schuylkill River as the Scool Kill River. Why do you think these spellings are so different?

Philadelphia: The Great Experiment—Grid Webisode

Now, use a modern day “Philadelphia Downtown Map” to compare Holme’s vision to current reality. Like the 1776 map, it should be viewed horizontally.

4. In Holme's “Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia”, he shows five squares, one empty square in the center of the map and four indicated with trees, each in a different quadrant of the city. Looking at the *Philadelphia Downtown* map, determine the current names of each of these squares. (Hint: other than the square in the center, they are each labeled in blue.)

Center:

Northwest:

Southwest:

Southeast:

Northeast:

5. Holmes' map shows all streets in an orderly grid pattern. In the northwest quadrant of the *Philadelphia Downtown* map, however, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway is at an angle that disrupts the grid. Why do you think such a street was built? What kinds of institutions are on or near this street?

6. Notice that the streets running from north to south are numbered. The numbers indicate how many blocks a street is from which body of water?

7. Most of Philadelphia's streets that run from east to west are named for trees. Why do you think that, as a Quaker, William Penn preferred to name streets for trees rather than for people?

8. The original city went from Vine Street in the north to South Street. Which three major north/south streets (streets that run all the way from the Delaware to the Schuylkill River) are *not* named for trees.