Philadelphia Assembled Teacher’s Guide

Philadelphia Assembled (PHLA) is a story of radical community building and active resistance told through images, words, and artifacts. It is a collective narrative about our city and some of the most urgent issues faced by communities within it. We are all invited to contribute to this narrative through our own experiences and actions. This guide is intended to help teachers navigate the complex ideas and questions amplified by PHLA with their students. Through drawing, writing, and discussion activities, students will create personal connections to the landscape of a city being reimagined and redefined daily.

This guide is organized into four lessons, three of which correspond to organizing principles of the exhibition itself: Sovereignty, Reconstructions, and Sanctuary. The Panoramas section, inspired by the City Panorama mural that greets visitors to PHLA, also serves as an introduction to visualizing personal and communal histories and experiences. The activities are written for a classroom setting but are also suitable for use in the exhibition galleries. They can be completed in any order, and we encourage you and your students to find the thematic threads that tie them together.

Although the lessons in this guide are most appropriate for use with upper elementary or middle school students, they can easily be adapted for younger and older children. Each section includes suggested differentiation. It is also important to acknowledge the strong emotions some students may have when discussing difficult topics, like incarceration and racism. Classroom teachers play a vital role in mediating and facilitating these conversations. We encourage you to consult the Teaching Tolerance Guide, Let’s Talk: Discussing Race, Racism, and other Difficult Topics with Students, for guidance and support.

Grade Level
Adaptable for all grades

Common Core Academic State Standards
1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6
2. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4
3. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

National Visual Arts Standards
• Responding: understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning
• Connecting: relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards
• Dimension 2 – Civics, Economics, Geography, and History
Suggested Art Images

- City Panorama images (Panoramas)
- Photograph of one wall in the Sovereignty atmosphere (Sovereignty)
- G is for Grooming photographs of Philadelphia barbershops by Theresa Stigale (Sovereignty)
- Photograph of Kensington rowhouses, by Tiesha K. Smith (Reconstructions)
- Photographs of the first floor of a Framework of an Affordable House (Reconstructions)
- Without My Record I am Free to Be..., Peoples Paper Co-op (PPC) (Reconstructions)
- Photograph of the preamble to The Reentry Bill of Rights (Reconstructions)
- Text selection from the preamble to The Reentry Bill of Rights (Reconstructions)
- Exterior of the Sanctuary Dome in the Perelman Building (Sanctuary)
- Interior of the Sanctuary Dome in the Perelman Building (Sanctuary)

Lesson Objectives
Students will be able to:

1. Understand how different experiences can shape individuals’ and groups’ perspectives on landscapes and historical events.
2. Verbalize challenges that a city might face and find the relationship between those challenges and the use of art in active resistance.
3. Create connections between the stories of others and their own personal narratives using observation, discussion, and writing.
4. Apply their understanding of the themes of Philadelphia Assembled to create their own artwork and artifacts.

Materials Needed

- Philadelphia Assembled art images (all lessons)
- Drawing and writing tools (all lessons)
- Grid paper (Panoramas)
- Straightedges (Panoramas)
- Reconstructions Worksheet (Reconstructions)
- Sovereignty A-Z Worksheet (Sovereignty)
- Sanctuary Worksheet (Sanctuary)
Panoramas

Essential Question
How can we use maps to visualize our histories and experiences?

Lesson Process
1. Introduce students to the term panorama: a wide, unbroken view of a landscape or region. They will be looking closely at several panoramic images in this lesson.

2. Show students images of the Futures panorama. Allow some time for close looking, then ask students to describe what they see. In order to facilitate a conversation about these complex images, you might ask students to find and describe examples of people, animals, natural features, and man-made features. Ask students if they know what landscape or region this panorama depicts. How can they tell? Ask students to identify features of a map and of a timeline.

3. Ask students what they think the creators of this panorama of Philadelphia want to communicate to the viewer. What tools have they used to articulate their message? What point of view are the creators of the panorama expressing?

4. Now repeat this exercise with the Reconstructions panorama. Give students time to look and describe, but also ask them to compare this panorama to the first one they saw. Does the panorama depict the same place or a different place? How can you tell? Does this image express a different point of view? What did the creators of the Reconstructions panorama do to show us what they believe is most important?

5. Guide students in a short discussion of maps and their purpose. How do we use maps in our everyday lives? Do maps show us a true, objective view of a place, or can maps have a point of view? Do some maps of Philadelphia emphasize some locations over others?

6. Begin a mapping exercise with your students. Choose a place that is familiar to everyone, such as the classroom, and ask students to help you draw a panorama of this location. Draw your example on a white board or large chart paper so that everyone can see. Once you have a basic outline, ask several volunteers to locate, draw, and label the feature that they believe is most important. Ask them to add the locations and dates of important events to this panorama. Is there agreement about what places, objects, and events are most important, or are there different opinions represented? Why might we have different points of view?

7. Provide students with mapping tools, such as grid paper, straightedges, and colored pencils. Ask them to decide collectively on a place that is common and familiar to everyone. They will create their own personal maps of that place. Older students might draw maps of their school building or neighborhood, while younger students might draw their classroom. Encourage students to express their own points of view in the map-making process. They are mapping their own histories and experiences in a community.

8. Ask students to consider the following questions as they create their maps: Where are their personal landmarks in this place? What memories do those landmarks hold? How can they use symbols, labels, size, or color to show what is most important to them? How can they incorporate the element of time into their maps? What important events mark their personal landscapes?
9. When students have completed their maps, provide time and a space to share. Ask them to compare and contrast their maps with those of their classmates. What is similar and what is different? What do they think accounts for the differences? What can you learn about your classmates by looking at their personal maps?

10. Keep the display of maps up in your classroom. Tell students that they can add to their maps any time they observe changes in their landscapes, remember a forgotten experience, or create new memories.

**Suggested Differentiation**

5. Even the youngest students will find many compelling images to describe in the City Panoramas and can identify the elements of a map with guidance. Display a simpler map, with some man-made features, natural features, and a key, for reference.

6. You can also simplify the mapping process for young students by limiting it to an area that is small and very familiar, and helping them to locate, draw, and label the places that are most important to them. This might be the cubby where they keep personal belongings, a favorite center to play in, or where they sit for lunch.
Sovereignty

Essential Question
How do we practice self-determination?

Lesson Process
1. *Philadelphia Assembled* defines sovereignty as the ability of an individual or a community to determine its own narrative. One way to explain this to students is to find the words “reign” and “over” in the word sovereignty. What does it mean to reign over something? What does it mean to have ownership over something?

2. After defining what sovereignty means, show your students an image of a wall in the Sovereignty atmosphere. What do you see? Do these objects have anything in common? What do you notice about the way each object is displayed on the wall? How is this different from what you typically see at an art museum? The objects are hung using a pegboard to give the gallery a more relatable feeling, like it is a marketplace. This is the Sovereignty A–Z Marketplace. The everyday objects displayed here represent the cultural and economic sovereignty, or self-determination, of a community.

3. Find the letter G on the wall (*G is for Grooming* in the Sovereignty alphabet). Show your students the barbershop photographs by Theresa Stigale. It is not unusual to see photographs in an art museum, but these photos are also important symbols of sovereignty. Historically, because of racial segregation, people of color have not always been allowed into certain spaces. Small businesses like barbershops were and still are places that people of color feel ownership over and comfort in. These photographs show their sovereignty over that space.

4. Ask students to describe what they see in the photographs. Are these images familiar to students? What can we tell about the people pictured from their body language and their facial expressions? How do they feel? What other letters of the alphabet could these scenes represent?

5. Talk with your students about places that they feel they could call their own. Where do they feel the most confident and at ease? What are other objects, activities, or traditions that are important to them and their families? This is a way they can begin to develop sovereignty over their own narrative.

6. Hand out the Sovereignty A–Z Worksheet and have your students create their own alphabets. This alphabet can include ideas, objects, places, and activities. Encourage students to use every letter of the alphabet for a word or phrase that is meaningful to them.

7. After giving your students time to fill out their personal Sovereignty A–Z, have them choose one word or phrase that they would want to share with others. Ask students how they could represent this part of their story. Students can use drawing tools to create a work of art that illustrates that letter in their alphabet. Alternatively, they might want to bring a symbolic artifact from home or tell a short story. Set aside a space in your classroom dedicated to displaying student artwork and artifacts. Have your students work together as artists and curators to decide how to display their work, giving them total ownership over the space.
Suggested Differentiation

7. The Sovereignty A–Z exercise is a great way to help young students develop alphabetic fluency. If students are not prepared to do this activity independently, consider creating a classroom alphabet. Have each student suggest a word or phrase for at least one letter and sign their name beside their contribution. They can draw pictures to illustrate the class Sovereignty alphabet.

8. Older students may wish to investigate the concept of economic sovereignty more fully. Ask them about the small businesses in their own communities. Do they visit any of these businesses regularly? Do they know the owners? Are any of their family members owners of a small business? Assign students to find out more about a barbershop or other family-owned business in their neighborhood. Ask them to interview family members or friends who frequent the business, or the owners of the business, if possible. What are the personal benefits to owning a small business? What are the benefits to the community? What are some of the challenges?
Reconstructions

Essential Question
How can we rewrite our present and future narratives by listening to the past?

Lesson Process
1. Begin the lesson by defining with students what it means to construct and reconstruct. Ask students the following questions to guide a discussion: What are some examples of things that we construct? Why do these things sometimes need to be reconstructed? Is reconstruction always exactly the same as the original, or does a reconstruction include change? What are some examples of change?

2. Philadelphia is a constantly changing and evolving city. Show students the photograph of Kensington rowhouses by Tiesha K. Smith. Ask them to describe the houses in the picture. How does this photograph show changes taking place in a neighborhood? Ask students to share examples of change they notice in their own neighborhoods and communities. Have they ever felt strong emotions about neighborhood changes (for example, if a favorite corner store closes, or a new playground is built)?

3. Show students an image of the Framework for an Affordable House. What do they notice about this structure? What is this house missing? Ask students why they think the house might be missing walls and a ceiling. What do walls and a ceiling symbolize? What is the relationship between the photographs you are discussing and the Framework of an Affordable House?

4. Show students the images of Without My Record I am Free to Be... Explain that these photographs show portraits and writings by people who were once incarcerated but are now free. The Polaroid photographs are mounted onto handmade paper that was created from the pulp of their criminal records.

5. Read a few of the letters out loud to your students. Alternatively, distribute examples of Polaroids and writings to pairs of students. Allow them to read the letters and look closely at the photographs on their own.

6. Ask students to consider the following questions: What does it mean to have a record? What are the subjects of the photos trying to communicate to the viewer? Why do you think the writing does not say what crimes the individuals committed? How is the act of tearing up a record and creating something new from it symbolic? Bring the class back together to discuss students’ responses.

7. Life can be very difficult for those who were once incarcerated and are now reentering the outside world. Ask students to imagine the challenges they might face. Show students a picture of the Preamble to the Reentry Bill of Rights. Read the selected text from the Preamble together. Why might it be necessary for formerly incarcerated people to create their own Bill of Rights? Why might people who were incarcerated want to reconstruct their own stories?

8. Ask students to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Do they think about things that happened last week or last year? Do they think far into the future? Do they ever wish they could go back and change or reconstruct something from the past?
9. Hand out the Reconstructions Worksheet to your students. Tell them that they will be using their reflections to write messages to their past and future selves. First, they will use the Past Self-Portrait and Future Self-Portrait boxes on their worksheets to create images of themselves at points in the past and in the future.

10. In creating their self-portraits, encourage students to be specific. Tell them to think of particular points in time, visualize the person they have been in the past, or imagine the person they will be in the future. These are students’ visualizations of themselves, and they have ownership over them. As an alternative, students may bring in photos of themselves when they were younger to use for their Past Self-Portraits.

11. Before writing messages to their past and future selves, ask students to consider the following questions: What are some things they know now that they wish they had known in the past? What wisdom could help their past selves overcome a challenge? What is important now that they want to remember for the future? What do they hope and dream for their future selves? Provide time for students to complete their self-portraits and messages on the Reconstructions Worksheet.

12. Revisit these Reconstructions with students at the end of the school year. Facilitate a reflective conversation with them. Did they follow their advice to themselves after writing it down? Would they want to tell their future selves something different now? How does it feel now to think about their past experiences?

Suggested Differentiation
Because young children may have trouble situating themselves in time and thinking about past, present, and future events, give them very concrete anchors for their messages. You might ask them to remember a recent time when they made a big mistake and got in trouble, tried really hard to master a new skill, or felt frightened of something. Have them draw themselves in that moment and write as if they were talking to a friend. This is a good opportunity to empathize. For the Future Self-Portraits, ask students to picture themselves completing a challenge, like learning to swim or ride a bike. What words of encouragement do they have? Assist students with writing if necessary.
Sanctuary

Essential Question
How do we create and maintain safe spaces?

Lesson Process
1. Show your students the images of the inside and outside of the Sanctuary Dome. Introduce the word sanctuary and discuss its meaning with students. Ask them what they think the purpose of the dome is. Share some background information. Before the Sanctuary Dome was inside the Perelman Building, it was stationed in different parts of Philadelphia. This was a place for anyone who wanted a safe space to talk, perform, or just be.

2. Brainstorm with your students about guidelines for behavior inside of a safe space. How should we talk, listen, and interact with others in a safe space? You might use class rules for circle time or meeting time as a reference. Guide students to articulate some norms, such as showing respect for our thoughts, feelings, and bodies; or listening to each other with open hearts and minds.

3. Ask students for examples of places where they feel safe. What characteristics of these places make them safe? Create a list of “safe space” descriptors together. Emphasize that a safe space does not have to be an actual location, but could be a person, an object, or a place you go in your imagination.

4. Give students time to look closely at the Sanctuary Dome and describe its features. Ask them what they see that might make this space feel safe. What would you think and feel standing outside the Dome? How would it feel to be inside the Dome? Why might the designers have made this space circular instead of square or rectangular? What is the purpose of having windows? Would everyone feel welcome in this space? Is there anything that students would want to change about the space?

5. Now turn the conversation over to your students and ask what they would want in their ideal safe space. This space could be real or entirely imagined. What would they want that space to look and feel like? Would they want perfect silence or a specific type of music playing? Do they want their space to smell like freshly baked cookies or like wild flowers? Are there favorite objects in the space that make them feel confident and secure? Encourage students to use sensory, descriptive language.

6. Distribute the Sanctuary Worksheet to students. They can use this paper to create their own safe spaces in whatever form is most comfortable for them. They might draw a picture, write a descriptive paragraph or a poem, fold the paper into a small container, or combine different forms of expression. After discussing some possible creative choices with students, allow them complete control over their sanctuaries.

7. When students have completed their Sanctuary Worksheet, provide an opportunity to share. Brainstorm ways that they could bring elements of their sanctuary spaces to your classroom. You might designate a specific area for quiet time, or add more colorful artwork to the walls. Create your guidelines for how to participate in a safe space together and write them down. Display the guidelines in your classroom to officially designate it a safe space.
Suggested Differentiation

The term Sanctuary City is common in the news and current events. Philadelphia is designated as a Sanctuary City, but what does this mean in practice? Older students can investigate the term Sanctuary City by finding a news story in print or online. Have them bring the stories to class and summarize their findings in a class discussion. What perspectives are represented in these news stories? Is there agreement or disagreement over who should receive sanctuary in our city and our country? What are the implications for your school community? Use this investigation to frame your class conversation around creating a safe classroom space.
Suggested Art Images: Panoramas

City Panorama, Futures
Suggested Art Images: Panoramas

City Panorama, Futures, details

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philamuseum.org/education
Suggested Art Images: Panoramas

City Panorama, Reconstructions
Suggested Art Images: Panoramas

City Panorama, Reconstructions, detail
Suggested Art Images: Sovereignty

G is for Grooming, photographs of Philadelphia barbershops by Theresa Stigale

Photograph of one wall in the Sovereignty atmosphere
Suggested Art Images: Reconstructions

Photograph of Kensington rowhouses, by Tiesha K. Smith

Photograph of the first floor of a Framework of an Affordable House

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philamuseum.org/education
Suggested Art Images: Reconstructions

Without My Record I am Free to Be…, Peoples Paper Co-op (PPC)
Suggested Art Images: Reconstructions

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Suggested Art Images: Reconstructions

Excerpt from the Preamble to the Re-entry Bill of Rights

“We’ve done our time. Let us become who we want to be. But it’s not black and white. Some of us came home to housing. Some of us were homeless. Some spent 7 month trying to get an approved home plan while wasting away in halfway houses. Some of us struggle finding positive support from family and friends, while others came home to mentors, wives, husbands, and so many open arms...

But even after being out for years we struggle. I struggle to keep me and my children together. I struggle to afford more than a room. I struggle to find a job I’m NOT overqualified for. I struggle to feel human, not looked down upon.”

Photograph of the preamble to The Reentry Bill of Rights
Suggested Art Images: Sanctuary

Exterior of the Sanctuary Dome in the Perelman Building

Interior of the Sanctuary Dome in the Perelman Building

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PHLA
Teacher’s Guide
Worksheets

Philadelphia Assembled
Radical community building
Active resistance
Personal narratives
Urgent issues
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Reconstructions

Leave a message for your past self (optional: specify date and time):

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Leave a message for your future self (optional: specify date and time):

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Past Self-Portrait

Future Self-Portrait
Sanctuary