



**THEMATIC COURSE TITLE:**

**CITY STORIES: HOBOKEN TO HOLLYWOOD TO HAVANA**

**STUDENT LEVEL:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grades (Period 3?)

**TEACHER:** Ms. Coffin, History and Sociology

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami have become major business and cultural centers in the United States. Each American metropolis serves as a center of trade, manufacturing, and the arts. These cities often grew up around marketplaces, where goods from distant places could be exchanged for local products. Throughout the United States, cities have been founded at the intersections of transportation routes, or at points where goods must shift from one mode of transportation to another, as at river and ocean ports.

This course will examine the strategic location and growth of such cities as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Miami, and Havana. It will examine how the Industrial Revolution, Prohibition, and the American mob led to the growth and expansion of these cities. Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Industrial Revolution marked a major turning point in American history. It changed American cities more rapidly than any other time period. New York had a population of about 313,000 in 1840 but had reached 4,767,000 in 1910. Chicago exploded from 4,000 to 2,185,000 during the same period. Millions of rural dwellers no longer needed on farms flocked to the cities, where new factories churned out products for the new markets. Such markets were made accessible by railroads and steamships.

Buildings, like the skyscrapers of New York and Chicago, tend to be the most visible elements of the city. Their monumental features give each city its unique character. These tall buildings were not technically feasible until the invention of the elevator and steel-frame construction methods. Skyscrapers are marvels of the real estate market. By building up instead of out they make maximum use of a minimal amount of space in many American cities. These tall office buildings were often constructed by the immigrant population and led to increased employment in such markets as banking, finance, and management. Such architecture shifted the American economy from a country of small firms to one of large corporations.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the American mafia also greatly increased its operations after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, known as Prohibition, was passed in 1919. This amendment was a constitutional ban on the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcohol. Mobsters like Lucky Luciano, Al Capone, Benjamin "Bugsy Siegel, and Meyer Lansky expanded their organized crime operations from New York to Chicago to Las Vegas to Cuba and more.

"City Stories" will trace the development of the major metropolises in the United States and Cuba during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Along with reading assignments, students will see films and television programs related to the changing lifestyles, political structures, and American mafia in these cities. Students will also utilize PowerPoint and SimCity software to explore such topics as city architecture, geography, urban planning, culture, and crime.