

Migration

B-42
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CATEGORY: BRAZIL: NOW

CONCEPTS: URBANIZATION, migration, urban/rural, government

ACTIVITY: LET'S DESIGN A CITY: BRASILIA. This unit focuses on the idea that cities have not always been as they are now: they are born, they grow, they change. Sometimes cities can be created for special purposes: Washington, D.C., and Brasilia are two examples. The unit also shows that the design of a city often reflects the designers' concept of a city. The concept of a city is ETHNOCENTRIC and, therefore, there is no universal definition of "city."

OBJECTIVES: To make the student aware of his/her urban surroundings. Upon completion of this unit the student will be able to give her/his own definition of a "city" and its characteristics. The student will be aware of the role ETHNOCENTRICITY plays in the concept and design of cities.

MATERIALS: Reproductions of the article on Brasilia and "Brasiland" worksheet, paper, pen, colored pencils or markers

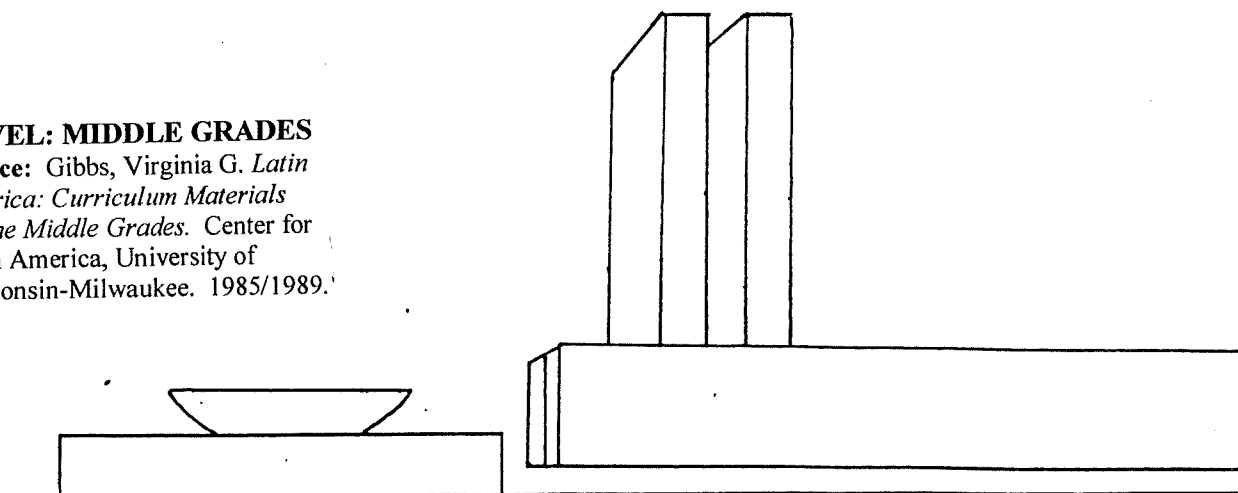
PROCEDURE: Have the students read the article on Brasilia. Then have them use the worksheet, first discussing what makes up a city and then designing their own. You may want to remind them of components they might forget, i.e., sewer system, electric power, major highways to leave the city, water supply, etc.

VOCABULARY: urban, ethnocentric, city planner, architect, landscaping, transportation network, commercial center

RESOURCES: Francisco Bullrich, New Directions in Latin American Architecture, New York: George Braziller, 1969. Leopoldo Castedo, A History of Latin American Art and Architecture from Pre-Columbian Times to the Present, New York: Praeger, 1969.

LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985/1989.



BRASILIA

What is a City?

The meaning of the word "city" is somewhat unclear, although it is such a common word. In general, it can be said that a city is a place of considerable size where a large number of people live and work. But people have different ideas of what a city is or what it should look like. Each person bases his or her ideas on what they know best: the city they live in. Thus, we can say that most definitions of a city are ethnocentric, which means they come only from the culture each person is used to and ignore the idea of city in other cultures. Brasília, Brazil's capital city, is a clear example.

The Story of Brasília

Brasília has often been called "a dream come true," because it is in reality a dream turned into reality. In 1883, a Brazilian monk named Dom Bosco had a strange dream in which he imagined he was travelling by train and witnessed the murder of two monks by a group of Indians. After he awoke, Dom Bosco described the place exactly and predicted that within two generations the Promised Land would appear on the same spot. In 1960, 77 years later, the place Dom Bosco saw in his dream became the site of Brasília.

Historically, the origins of Brasília go even further back. The Marquis de Pombal was the first person to suggest placing the capital city in the interior of Brazil in 1763. The seat of government had just been moved from Salvador (Bahia) to Rio de Janeiro. By the mid-nineteenth century the name Brasília had been suggested as well as some appropriate locations. In 1891, the idea of a new capital was written into the Constitution.

It wasn't until 1956 that the first practical step was taken to establish Brasília. Juscelino Kubitschek had become President of Brazil and he wanted to do something that would always be remembered. The construction of Brasília was his answer.

Kubitschek's ambitions were not the only reason for the creation of Brasília. The city of Rio de Janeiro had been capital of Brazil for nearly 200 years. Rio lies on the coast, where most of the nation's people live. The rest of the country is very thinly settled. Brazilians believed that if the capital were moved inland, people would leave the coast and this would lead to the development of the sparsely populated and economically backward interior. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the country was poor, a new capital city was to be built at a place about 950 kilometers (590 miles) northwest of Rio. Brasília was officially inaugurated in 1960, although much of the construction was still unfinished.

Thousands of people were involved in the construction of Brasília, but Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer can be considered the greatest contributors. Costa thought of Brasília as a park city and in his plans he tried to blend nature with the needs of a modern city by making full use of open spaces and landscaping. One of the most unusual features of the city is that pedestrians are kept completely separate from motor vehicles and the road system was planned with no intersections or traffic lights.

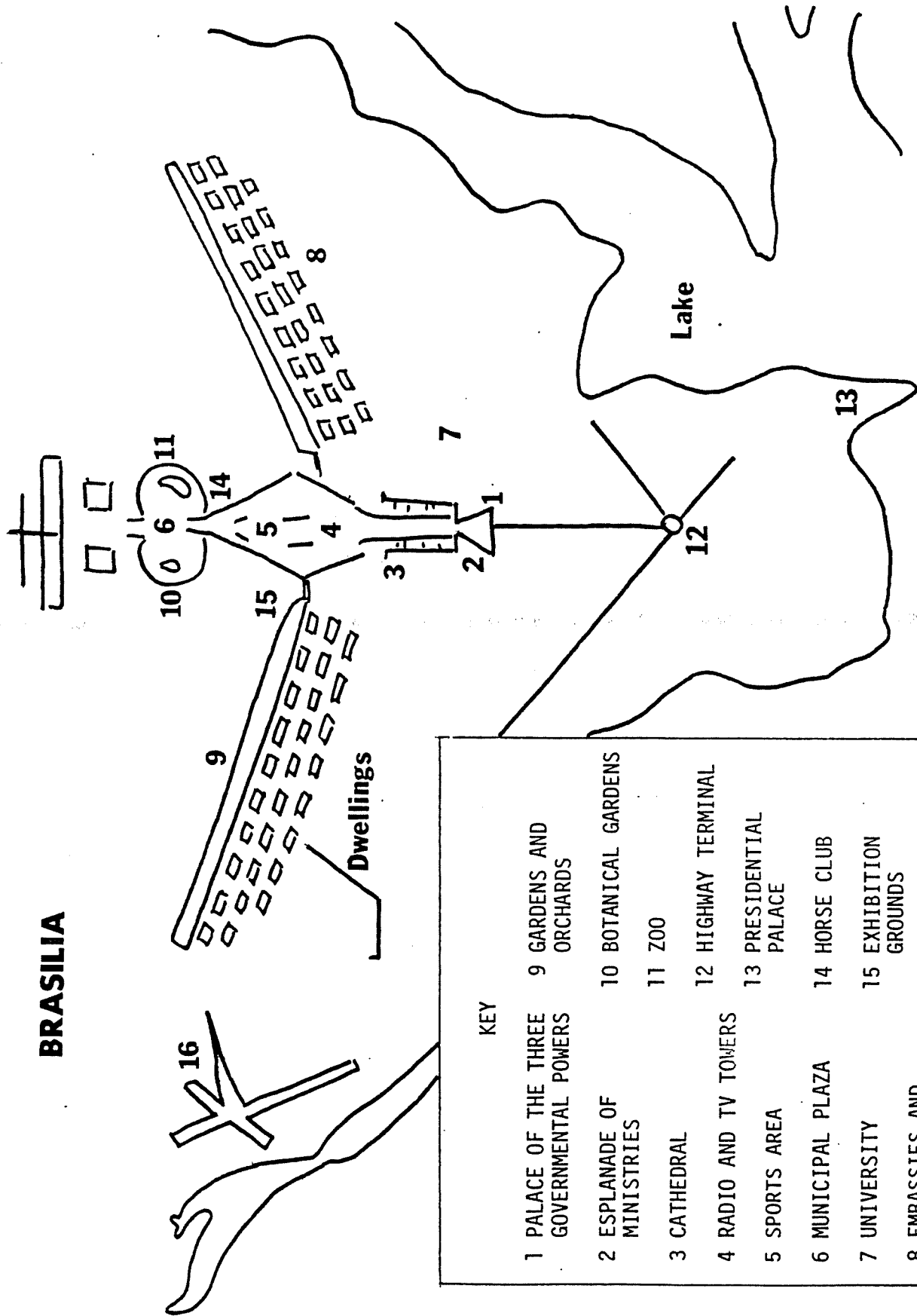
Lucio Costa's general city plan was very simple. The city was laid out in the shape of an airplane. The wings of the airplane are the areas that include homes, apartment buildings, stores and offices. The fuselage or body is formed by a wide boulevard along which various public buildings were constructed. At the nose of the plane is the "Praça dos Três Poderes" (Plaza of the Three Powers). Here are the buildings which house all three branches of the Brazilian government. These include the Executive Building for the President and his staff, the Congress Building, and the Supreme Court Building. The city is partly enclosed by an artificial lake. At the edge of the lake is the Presidential Palace called the "Palace of the Dawn."

Most of Brasília's architecture is the work of Oscar Niemeyer. His designs for the National Congress, Cathedral, Palace of the Dawn, and Palace of Itamarah are among the most beautiful examples of modern architecture.

Brasília is far more than a beautiful, modern city designed to house the government of Brazil. When the government moved there from Rio, so did most of the important banks such as the Central Bank and the Bank of Brazil. Since its inauguration, the city has become the commercial center for a large area of the interior, and many large national companies now have their headquarters there. Brasília has caused much economic growth in the surrounding area. It has become the focus of an extensive transportation network. A 1,931 kilometer (1,200 miles) highway connects the capital with northeastern Brazil. This new highway cuts through part of the Amazon Basin. Air routes, highways and railroads link Brasília with São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Brasília has been called a city of the 21st century. Can you think why? Think of a student your age who was born and raised in Brasília. How might his idea of a city be different from yours? Or similar? Can you think of a city in the United States that has a similar history to that of Brasília? (Hint: Both cities were designed to be the capital of the nation.)

BRASILIA



KEY	
1	PALACE OF THE THREE GOVERNMENTAL POWERS
2	ESPLANADE OF MINISTRIES
3	CATHEDRAL
4	RADIO AND TV TOWERS
5	SPORTS AREA
6	MUNICIPAL PLAZA
7	UNIVERSITY
8	EMBASSIES AND LEGATIONS
9	GARDENS AND ORCHARDS
10	BOTANICAL GARDENS
11	ZOO
12	HIGHWAY TERMINAL
13	PRESIDENTIAL PALACE
14	HORSE CLUB
15	EXHIBITION GROUNDS
16	AIRPORT

LET'S DESIGN A CITY

Worksheet

Today most people on earth live in what are called urban areas. Human beings have gathered together in a series of places, where they live and work. Depending mostly on size these places are called communities, villages, towns or cities.

Take a few minutes to think about the place where you live. How large is it? What is its population? What does it look like? Is there a large body of water nearby? Movie theaters? Is it an older place or a new town? And finally . . . are you happy where you live?

- I. Write a definition of the word "city." What is a city? Write your thoughts in your own words.
- II. Pretend that you are a city planner, and that the President of Brazil has asked you to design a new city. The city is to be built on a vast plateau in the interior of the country. Can you think of 15 items you would need to include in your design? (We have started the list with two easy ones; can you find 12 more?)

- | | | |
|------------|-----|-----|
| 1. houses | 6. | 11. |
| 2. streets | 7. | 12. |
| 3. | 8. | 13. |
| 4. | 9. | 14. |
| 5. | 10. | 15. |

The name of this new city will be Brasiland.

- III. The President has liked your ideas and now wants you to show him a complete plan (map) of your design for Brasiland.

On a separate sheet of paper draw your plan for Brasiland. Let your imagination tell you where to place houses and other buildings, and the shapes of streets and avenues. You are free to set the city limits (boundaries). You can use colored pencils to enhance your drawing. When you are finished, share your design with your classmates.

- IV. Is your design similar or different from theirs? Is your design different from your own city or similar? Think about living in your designed city. How would your life be different, or would it be the same?

