DYKER HEIGHTS
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name
INTRODUCTORY READING

Adaptation

Neighborhood in southwestern Brooklyn, bounded to the north by Eighth Avenue and 62nd Street, to the east by New Utrecht and 18th avenues, to the south by Gravesend Bay and Fort Hamilton Parkway; it encompasses Dyker Beach Park on Gravesend Bay and the huge Dyker Beach Golf Course to its north. Once part of the town of New Utrecht, the area is often considered a section of Bay Ridge. It may have been named for two Van Dykes who helped to divide the land in 1719 or for the dikes used to drain and reclaim marshland that once covered the area. It remained largely rural into the early twentieth century when developers built a number of one- and two-family houses. Mansions along 11th Avenue afforded magnificent views of the Narrows and Gravesend Bay. A business district developed along 13th Avenue. In the twenty-first century the neighborhood is chiefly residential. Most of the housing consists of one-family detached homes, and the population is predominantly Italian; many families have lived there for four or five generations and put up elaborate, brightly lit lawn displays at Christmastime.

CITATION: “Dyker Beach.” Encyclopedia of New York City. 2nd Ed.
1. Referring back to the introductory reading, what town was Dyker Heights original located it? How was it originally spelled?

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2. What do you think the land looked like in the 1660s, when New Utrecht was a small hamlet?

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3. Look at Document 1. What other names on the map do you recognize? Where have you seen them before?

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4. What river separates Brooklyn from Manhattan?

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1. Look at Document 2. Describe the house in the print (size, shape, materials, etc.).

2. Describe the surrounding area, around the house in Document 2.

3. What can you learn about early New Utrecht by looking at DOCUMENT 2?
1. Look at **Document 3**. What words does Walter L. Johnson use to describe Dyker Heights?

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2. According to **Document 3**, what **amenities** did the Dyker Heights Clubhouse have?

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3. Describe the house in the advertisement.

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4. If you were living in crowded Brooklyn or Manhattan, why might moving to Dyker Heights have been attractive?

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**Excerpt**

**A Carefully Worked Out Plan for the Poly Country Day School.**

Dr. Lane went over the plans very carefully with me. He pointed out the advantages that the boy would have by spending his whole day at the school property, and under the close supervision and guidance of his master, in the classroom, in the gymnasium and on the grounds. Under these circumstances a companionship springs up between the pupil and his master.

The school will open at 9 o’clock in the morning and, at intervals in the morning hours, groups will be taken out for recreation, thus breaking up the work indoors. At the noon hour the boys will eat their dinner in the dining hall of the school. This meal will not consist merely of sandwiches and pie and other articles of food usually found at a lunch counter, but it will be a substantial dinner, furnished at a reasonable cost.

The boy practically is associated with his master the entire day, and is thus removed from all unwholesome surroundings, and is, during his working hours, constantly in an atmosphere of study. Even his play is directed by one who knows how to play scientifically.

Nearly all the study work, especially in the younger classes, is done at the school. For these classes there is practically no homework, that **bagbear** of the pupils of the public schools. The advantages of studying at the school must be apparent to those who have had an opportunity of observing the homework system. In studying at school the pupil is under the direct guidance of the tutor. If there is anything he does not understand it is explain to him. And many of the problems that arise cannot be explained by the parent.

The school will close at 5:30 p.m., so the boy will go to his home for dinner and spend the evening in the family circle. Thus it will be seen that all the advantages of the boarding school, which permits the masters to have constant supervision and control of their pupils, will be retained with all the advantages of the day school.
1. Read Document 4. Why did Dr. Lane believe it was in the students’ best interest to remain on school grounds all day?

2. Why did Dr. Lane think that being both at home and school was good for the students?

3. What were some of the main differences between private and public school?

4. What kind of boys do you think were able to attend this school? Why do you think that?
Fire Laddies Make a Fine War Garden

Dyker Heights “No Man’s Land” Now Yields Vegetables

There is an engine and a hook and ladder company in Brooklyn that is not worrying very much about the high cost of living and the fact that the city government has taken no decided steps towards making the monthly pay envelopes a more worthy size. The firemen are members of Engine Company No. 284 and Hook and Ladder Company No. 149, both located on Seventy-ninth street and Twelfth avenue. The reason for the lack of worry is that they are eating fresh vegetables that would be way beyond their pocketbooks were it not for the fact that each is the proud owner of a real war garden.

Across the street from the fire house there was bit of unimproved property that would have been like the promised land to a goat, but which was an eyesore to the fighters. About a year ago the firemen decided to clean up “no man’s land,” as the lot was called by the residents of the Dyker Heights section. It did not take the fire ladies long to make the old lot look like a bit of Prospect Park. It was then that one of the firemen hit upon a brilliant idea.

War gardens had begun to bloom in Dyker Heights like morning glories on the backyard fence. Why not have a war garden in “no man’s land?” The idea spread like a fire not attacked by the men of the Seventy-ninth street station house. The owner of the property consented and soon the firemen were spending their time making gardens. The lot was divided into twenty-five small plots, all the same size, staked out by the men who being humorously included, called the little plots “Mike’s Grub Stakes,” “Jim’s Dug Out,” “George’s Beanery,” and similar names.

James Sperry, captain of the fire station, took a deep interest in the little farms. He gave the men as much spare time as possible to cultivate the land, and as a result the firemen have a truck garden that rivals any of the Long Island farms. It is astonishing how the well kept gardens have
1. Read **Document 5**. Why did the firemen want to start gardens?

2. What do you think “like morning glories on a backyard fence” means?

3. Why might “well kept gardens” improve a neighborhood?

4. What is a war garden?
The Dyker Heights Country Club at the corner of 13th ave. and 86th st., one of the landmarks of the Dyker Heights section, has recently been purchased by the Italian Country Club of Brooklyn, recently incorporated, and will be used by the organization as its home after the building has been renovated. The property covers a plot 100x120 and the clubhouse is a large Colonial building, erected in 1898 by Walter L. Johnson, who helped to develop the section, and was used for a number of years as a community center for the residents of the locality.

The membership of the new club consists of prominent Italian professionals and business men of the boro. There was a meeting at the club last night, which resulted in the election of S. Gardine as president; G. Fusco, vice president; A. Stabilli, treasurer; and S Delittle, secretary. Julian V. Carabba, one of the organizers, has been engaged as counsel for the club.
1. What does Document 6 tell you about who was lived in Dyker Heights in the 1920s?

2. Who was allowed to be a member of the club?

3. You have seen the name “Walter L. Johnson” and this building before in this packet. Where?

4. What changed about this building and, perhaps, the neighborhood since 1899?

1. When did the Dyker Beach Golf Course open? Use **Document 7b** and think critically.

2. Describe the houses along the edge of the golf course.

3. Who ran the golf course? Why do you think that is? (Hint: Use the introductory reading for assistance.)

**Role of Jonah Irks Dyker Heights Area**

Refuses to be Swallowed by Bay Ridge at Whim of Realty Brokers—to Ask City for Boundary Markers

By F. V. Paterno

Dyker Heights is to maintain its identity after all.

In spite of the recent remapping of Bay Ridge by local real estate brokers, a committee of civic workers, acting without aid, is urging the city to identify the district by placing markings on the ancient posts at 78th St. and 11th Ave. where Dyker Heights begins.

The posts stand on both sides of the road in 11th Ave. One is near each curb, with a second just outside the building line. They were erected when builders first started to develop the section more than 25 years ago and since then ivy has grown around them, giving them a picturesque appearance.

Posts Settle Question

There has been some question as to where the section begins, but the old posts settle the matter beyond any doubt, those interested say.

There were no streets when the development of Dyker Heights started other than 11th Ave. and 78th St. So a few cem paths leading to the neighboring pastures were the only connecting lines.

A self-appointed committee headed by Arthur F. Moore wants the city to inscribe the words “Entrance to Dyker Heights” on the posts near the curb on both sides of the street.

“We are interested in having the old posts marked,” Moore said today; “because they are in danger of being removed if some action is not taken. They have been there for years, not guiding or informing anyone. As a matter of fact, the people living nearby are somewhat proud of the old markings and are eager to see them stay.”

Bay Ridge Controversy

Interest in the markings resulted from recent discussions as to what constitutes Bay Ridge. Residents below 78th St. are in Dyker Heights, it is asserted. Those living north of that point are in Lefferts Park, often included as part of the district, the committee workers assert.

Lefferts Park has no connection with Dyker Heights at all, you will be told, and for that reason a boundary line should be marked.

“When I was a young man,” said Thomas P. Brierly, one of those urging the recognition of the section, “Dyker Heights was considered as fine a residential area as there was in the greater city.”

“Throughout all these years it has remained a fine community. That is why we would like it to stand by itself, have its entrance recognized and remembered by those who visit the section.”

Besides Mr. Moore and Mr. Brierly, Dunyan Morrison Jr. and Henry H. Lake are supporting the project. They hold that it is an inexpensive and simple thing for the city to do and for that reason should be done as soon as possible.

Fine Homes

Dyker Heights today contains some of the finest homes in the Bay Ridge area. Many wealthy families find it quiet and desirable. Some of the homes in the section were built at tremendous costs. Owners would like to preserve them against invasion.

Apartments buildings in the district are few and far between. Residents there do not care to see them encroach upon the smaller homes.

**Adventurer Reaches Dream Port—Death**

Maud Allin, 20, was one of India’s countless unknown, friendless, a Hindu orphan with an adventurous spirit which called him to faraway places.

When the British steamer Kimberly pulled into Calcutta, he implored its officers to give him a berth. He was rewarded with a menial job.

The ship’s next port of call was New York. The steamer docked at the foot of 47th St. and when a check on the passenger was made yesterday Maud was missing.

He was found dead, suffocated from live steam escaping from a pipe in the bunker. Maud Allin will be buried in the city he never saw.

**TRIPS DOWN ’U’ STAIRS**

Descending the stairs of the West End Elevated line yesterday afternoon, Jennie Panna, 35, of 1677 Bath Ave., tripped and fell. She sustained fractures of the ribs and right arm. Dr. Hoffman of Coney Island Hospital attended Mrs. Panna.

**Health and**
Transcription

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The posts stand on both sides of the road on 11th Ave. One is near each curb, with a second just outside the building. They were erected when builders first started to develop the section more than 25 years ago and since then ivy has grown around them, giving them a picturesque appearance.

Post Settle Question
There has been some questions as to where the section begins, but the old posts settle the matter beyond any doubt, those interested say. There were no streets when the development of Dyker Heights started other than 11th Ave. and 79th St. A few cow paths leading to the neighboring pastures were the only connecting links.

A self-appointed committee headed by Arthur F. Muir wants the city to inscribe the words “Entrance to Dyker Heights” on the posts near the curb on both sides of the street.

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But Lefferts Park has no connection with Dyker Heights at all, you will be told, and for that reason a boundary line should be marked.
“When I was a young man,” said Thomas F. Blueitt, one of those urging the recognition of the action, “Dyker Heights was considered as fine a residential area as there was in the greater city.

“Throughout all these years it has remained a fine community. That is why we would like it to stand by itself, have its entrance recognized and remembered by those who visit the section.”

Besides Mr. Muir and Mr. Blueitt, Duncan Morrison Jr. and Henry R. Lake are supporting the project. They hold that it is an inexpensive and simple thing for the city to do and for that reason should be done as soon as possible.

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Apartment buildings in the district are few and far between. Residents there do not care to see them encroach upon the smaller homes.
1. **Document 8** has spelling errors in the original article. (Sic) means that the document was transcribed faithfully and the errors were purposely left in. Why might it be important to not correct errors and look at historical documents in their original form?

2. Summarize the article in two or three sentences.

3. Why were residents of Dyker Heights so intent to keep the markers?

4. Do you wish that your neighborhood had clear boundaries? Why or why not?

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2. What are the tracks on the streets and the wires crisscrossing the top of the image? If you’re not sure, do research and find out!

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3. Describe the buildings.

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4. Describe the cars.

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Way to shine, Dyker Heights!

A Brooklyn neighborhood that goes bonkers for Christmas gained some national notoriety when it landed at the top of a list of best neighborhoods for holiday lights, according to a survey by real estate company Redfin.

Dyker Heights, home of the annual “Dyker Lights,” placed No. 1 for the second straight year on Redfin’s annual Christmas lights list, which the realty company launched in 2012. But the news is a mixed holiday blessing for some locals put out by throngs of visitors. “It gets crazy” said one Dyker Heights resident, who didn’t want to be identified for fear of upsetting neighbors in the close-knit community. She described tour buses rumbling along narrow streets, idling loudly and disgorging gawkers who fire off camera flashes, trample lawns and gardens, and leave garbage.

“I mean, even the Hampton Jitney comes, and these streets aren’t meant for tour buses,” she said, describing her own holiday house lights as “normal.”

It got so bad on Saturday night, she added, one festively lit street was closed off to vehicles — and even residents had trouble getting back into their homes. “It got out of hand,” she said.

The dazzling holiday bulb display even has its own Facebook page, “Dyker Heights Christmas Lights,” with more than 2,000 “Likes.”

The light-stringing elves of Dyker Heights were profiled by PBS in 2000, and ribbed by Conan O’Brien on “Late Night” in 2001. In that bit, O’Brien pointed to a giant, illuminated talking Santa that towered over one lawn, and joked that it was visible from space: “Several astronauts have called it tacky from 15 miles up.”
Holiday fame has its downsides, too, and Dyker Heights might be feeling a bit strung out from the attention.
1. Read **Document 10b.** What problems do the Christmas lights sometimes bring to the neighborhood?

2. Why might residents of Dyker Heights be proud of the attention?

3. Describe the lights in the photos.

4. How do you decorate your home for your family’s holidays?
GLOSSARY

**Amenity:** feature of a building or place

**Bagbear:** burden

**Detached home:** freestanding home, not an apartment

**Disgorge:** to spill out or release

**Encompass:** Include

**Engine Company:** a firehouse with fire engines

**Hook and Ladder Company:** a firehouse with trucks with special ladders on truck beds; these trucks have drivers in the front and drivers in the back

**Picturesque:** beautiful

**Predominant:** the most common

**Rural:** sparse and without buildings or a large population

**War garden:** also called “Victory Gardens,” used to provide food to the public to lessen the pressure on the national food supply, as food was being shipped to soldiers during wartime