PROSPECT PARK
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name
INTRODUCTORY READING


ADAPTATION

In 1834, the City of Brooklyn was chartered, and during the next 30 years it became the third largest city in the country, following only New York (Manhattan) and Philadelphia. Thousands of European immigrants settled in the growing city and sprawling farms gave way to homes.

At the same time public parks were gaining popularity in America. Beginning in 1858, the design team of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux transformed more than 800 acres of jagged rock into Central Park in Manhattan. It was the first landscaped public park in the United States.

Soon after a movement grew in Brooklyn for a park of its own. Leading the effort was James Stranahan, a businessman and civic leader. In the early 1860s, Stranahan argued that a park in Brooklyn "would become a favorite resort for all classes of our community, enabling thousands to enjoy pure air, with healthful exercise, at all seasons of the year...."

Calvert Vaux sketched Prospect Park’s present layout for Stranahan. Vaux convinced Olmsted to join the effort, and construction of the park began on July 1, 1866 under their supervision. Olmsted and Vaux’s plan included rolling green meadows, carriage drives with scenic lookouts, waterfalls, springs and a forest.

Organized sports gained popularity throughout the first half of the 1900s and the Park continued to host parades and celebrations that drew huge crowds. Parks Commissioner Robert Moses opened the zoo, bandshell and several playgrounds in the 1930s. Unfortunately, overuse of the Park became a problem in the 1950s and its landscape and structures started to become neglected.

By 1979 the Park’s landscape and structures had so seriously declined that visits dropped to the lowest in the Park’s history. In 1987, a group of private citizens founded the Prospect Park Alliance to work with the City to repair the Park. Its first campaign was to fix the Park’s 1912 Carousel, which had been closed due to disrepair. The resulting restoration became a symbol of the Park’s rebirth.

Today more than 8 million annual visitors enjoy a variety of activities and destinations at Prospect Park, from in-line skating to nature walks, from baseball games to zoo visits, and from picnicking to volunteer projects.
Mr. Editor: The subject of improving the city of Brooklyn is often discussed in your interesting paper. I am writing to offer my own opinion regarding one aspect of your nice city.

A narrow pathway near the iron railings of the Wall Street Ferry landing is the only place a tired pedestrian can rest while looking at the beautiful view of the East River from the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights.

Vacant fields surround either side of this view; the shaded trees are very pretty and surely deserve to be saved for a better purpose—Why were they not used long ago to make a “Prospect Park?” If I was a citizen of Brooklyn, I would petition, and pray, and convince my fellow Brooklynites that this area be saved for a public park.

The massive ferry landing forms an obvious center for a park. The path people walk on from their homes to the ferry may be bordered by gardens that will offer resting stops from the hardships of city life. At the end of day, the pregnant wife, child or friends can rest and wait for their loved ones to return from work and take a peaceful walk home.

Very soon this magnificent view may be blocked by new apartment buildings so that only those who live in these buildings will be able to enjoy it from their back windows. The idea is upsetting. Come to its rescue, those of you who have the power. Save this area for the reputation of Brooklyn Heights; save it for yourselves as admirers of the beautiful scenery; save for future generations this splendid picture nature has painted for you with Heaven’s best skill.

A. Visitors. Brooklyn, April 3, 1854
1. According to **DOCUMENT 1**, what does the writer say Brooklyn needs? What name does he suggest for it?

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2. Where does he say a “Prospect Park” should be located?

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3. How might Brooklynites use the proposed park?

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4. What does the writer think will happen if the park is not built soon?

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"Design for Prospect Park in the City of Brooklyn," Olmsted Vaux & Co. Landscape Architects. 1871. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.
1. What is DOCUMENT 2? When was it created?

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2. Describe at least 4 things you see on the map:

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3. What do you think is missing from this map that you might see if you visit Prospect Park and its neighboring communities today?

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4. Do you think building Prospect Park made more people want to move to the area? Why or why not?

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Our Prospect Park Architect

HARTFORD, CT -- Frederick Law Olmsted was born in Hartford, CT. in April 26, 1822. He was educated at Yale College (now Yale Univ.). He traveled throughout Europe and the U.S. studying landscape gardening and agricultural methods.

In 1857 Olmsted was appointed superintendent of Central Park, in Manhattan, the first great metropolitan park in the U.S. In collaboration with landscape architect Calvert Vaux he designed new plans for the park, which had a strong influence on park design throughout the country.

Brooklynites remember him most for his part in planning Prospect Park. Frederick Olmsted and Calvert Vaux saw Prospect Park as a kind of preservation society. It was just to provide "an opportunity for getting fresh air and exercise," explained Olmsted. "The main object is to produce a certain influence in the minds of people and through this to make life in the city healthier and happier." The two visionaries, Olmsted and Vaux, foresaw the arrival of the urban asphalt jungle. But the park must not only preserve; it must also be, he felt, a civilized refuge that blended into the city.

Frederic Law Olmsted was born on April 26, 1822. As a landscape architect the City of Brooklyn engaged him to design Prospect Park.

He died on August 28, 1903 in Waverly, MA. His home and studio, Fairfiled Estate outside of Boston, is now preserved as a National Historic Site and is open to the public.
1. According to DOCUMENT 3, who was Frederick Law Olmsted and what did he do for Brooklyn?

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2. What other famous New York City park did Olmsted help design

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3. Why did Olmsted think it important for Brooklynnites to have a park of their own?

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4. Do you think Olmsted achieved his mission “to make life in the city healthier and happier” by building Prospect Park? Explain why or why not:

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1. Describe what you see in **DOCUMENT 4**:

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2. According to the title, what is this document an image of? When was it published?

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3. Think about the types of things we find in parks. What clues does this image give you that proves it is a park?

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4. When you visit Prospect Park with your class think about whether or not surrounding area looks the same today. Provide examples of why you think it may or may not look similar:

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**SEEN IN PROSPECT PARK**

The Many Attractions of the People’s Pleasure Ground


Prospect Park possesses attractions at this season of the year that few persons can resist. First, there is the pure, wholesome air, with its mélange of sweet smelling odors, the vast stretches of beautiful green commons here and there broken by ridges covered with picturesque little groves from which, perhaps, can be seen in the placid waters of the lake. Then there are its beautiful flower beds, its drives, its walks and, above all, its natural scenery. There is no better place to study the tastes, manners and dispositions of Brooklynites than in this glorious park. It is the one place where they can go without a cent in their pockets and still have a good time.
1. What does the word "ATTRACTION" mean?

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2. According to DOCUMENT 5, what attractions does Prospect Park offer to visitors?

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3. Why do you think the author wrote this article?

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4. How can you tell the author likes Prospect Park?

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1. What is DOCUMENT 6? When is it from?

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2. What entertainment is being offered according to the left side of the “programme?”

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3. Describe what you see on the right side of the programme:

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4. An advertisement is a public notice used to call attention to something, often an item to purchase. What are the advertisements in this programme selling?

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1. **DOCUMENT 7** is a photograph from Prospect Park. Describe the types of people you see:

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2. What are the people in this photo doing?

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3. When do you think this photo was taken? How can you tell?

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4. What things would you bring to a picnic in Prospect Park?

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Carousel Promised for Prospect Park

Prospect Park, carousel-less for nigh on 20 years, will soon resound with the distinctive sound of the calliope and the shouts of children, the Parks Department promised today with the announcement of plans for a $100,000 merry-go-round. The new structure, similar to one which opened last year in Central Park, will be built between the Willinck Entrance on Flatbush Ave. near Empire Boulevard and the zoo.

Funds for the carousel will be provided by the Michael Friedsam Foundation and the building will be known as the Michael Friedsam Memorial, in memory of the former president of B. Altman and Company. The Friedsam Foundation also provided the money for the Manhattan counterpart.

Designed to blend with the adjacent zoo buildings, the carousel will be built of brick, with a slate roof and cupola, and will be octagonal in shape. It will be approximately 78 feet in diameter. The new Brooklyn merry-go-round, like the one in Central Park, will be a replacement for a burned out carousel. Unlike the Manhattan merry-go-round, however, which was in action again only eight months after the original attraction was destroyed, the Prospect Park building comes some two decades after its predecessor, John Burke, president of the B. Altman store, made the $100,000 gift for the Friedsam Foundation. Exact date for beginning construction has not been set.
1. According to DOCUMENT 8, what happened to Prospect Park’s old carousel?

2. Who is providing the money to build a new carousel?

3. How is the new carousel being designed to “blend in with the adjacent zoo buildings?”

4. Why do you think it took so long (20 years) for the carousel to be built?
Peril to park's plant life

What if there were no trees in Prospect Park?

"If you're a runner, biker, casual stroller, or toddler ready to climb the largest boulder, Prospect Park has been a quiet getaway oasis for many Brooklynites trying to have some fun or find relief from the grind of city life.

But the park is suffering from urban stress and wear and tear.

"The trees are not regenerating, they're under the stress of city living," said Barbara Caldwell, director of public relations for Prospect Park. "The topsoil has become hard, making it difficult for plant life to get nutrients. It would be like a person trying to breathe under asphalt."

With more than 6 million visitors a year, the 526 acres of park offer a pleasant respite from the glass and steel canyons of the city. But, it's at a high price -- the fined of visitors is taking a toll on the park's woodlands.

"One person snapping a twig doesn't impact a tree, but when 200 people a day pass through and snap away, it causes a problem," said Ainsley Caldwell, natural resources crew supervisor.

Prospect Park administrators are convinced that if nothing is done to protect the trees' habitat, many of them will die in less than 10 years.

"That's why they've launched a 20-year, $20 million restoration of the woodlands."

"In the 1980s people never thought of walking off-path," said Prospect Park administer Tupper Thomas. "People began walking off the paths in the 1980s looking to enjoy the beauty of the woods."

"Part of the strategy for reversing the damage done in the past 30 years calls for bringing unofficial paths created by the public into legitimate path system."

"Unofficial paths develop because it is the natural route," said Ainsley Caldwell.

"So, we use woodchips to line the path. The soil around the trees won't suffer from compaction because the woodchips allow for moisture and air to exchange to the roots."
**Peril to Park’s Plant Life**

By Austin Evans Denner, Daily News Staff Writer

What if there were no trees in Prospect Park?

Whether you’re a runner, biker, casual stroller, or toddler ready to climb the largest boulder, Prospect Park has been a quick getaway **oasis** for many Brooklynites trying to have some fun or find relief from the grind of city life.

But the park is suffering from urban stress and wear and tear.

“The trees are not **regenerating**. They’re under the stress of city living,” said Barbara Caldwell, director of public relations for Prospect Park. “The **topsoil** has become hard, making it difficult for plant life to get nutrients. It would be like a person trying to breath under asphalt.”

With more than 6 million visitors a year, the 526 acres of park offer a pleasant respite from the glass and steel canyons of the city. But, it’s at a high price – the flood of visitors is taking a toll on the park’s woodlands.

“One person snapping a twig doesn’t impact a tree, but when 300 people a day pass through and snap away it causes a problem,” said Ainsley Caldwell, natural resources crew supervisor.

Prospect Park administrators are convinced that if nothing is done to protect the trees’ habitat, many of them will die in less than 10 years.

That’s why they’ve launched a 25-year, $20 million restoration of the woodlands.

“In the 1860s people never thought of walking off-path,” said Prospect Park administrator Tupper Thomas. “People began walking off the paths in the 1960s looking to enjoy the beauty of the woods.”

Part of the strategy for reversing the damage done in the past 30 years calls for bringing unofficial paths created by the public into the legitimate path system.

“Unofficial paths develop because it is the natural route,” said Ainsley Caldwell. “So, we use woodchips to line the path. The soil around the trees won’t suffer from compactness because the woodchips allow for moisture and are to exchange to the roots.”
1. According to DOCUMENT 9, what is the problem the trees in Prospect Park are facing?

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2. What is the cause of this problem?

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3. What did visitors start doing in the 1960s that they did not do in the 1860s?

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4. What solution does the article offer to both take care of its trees and the new paths visitors are making while visiting the park?

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GLOSSARY

Adjacent: nearby or bordering

Asphalt Jungle: a large, highly populated and crowded city

Bandshell: raised outdoor stage for performances

Calliope: keyboard musical instrument consisting of a set of whistles

Chartered: incorporated or in this case, made into, a city

Civic Leader: a person who advocates for the interests of his or her community

Cupola: rounded roof or ceiling

Mélange: a mixture of different elements, in this case smells

Nigh: nearly

Oasis: a place that provides refreshing relief

Preservation Society: a group or organization that works to protect a thing or place

Regenerate: renew

Topsoil: rich surface soil in which plants have most of their roots and which the farmer turns over when plowing