Frederick Childe Hassam was born in 1859 in Dorchester, Massachusetts. In 1876 he was apprenticed to a local wood engraver and soon thereafter became a freelance illustrator. In 1883 Hassam traveled to Great Britain, Holland, Spain, and Italy, where he produced a large number of watercolors that were exhibited at the Williams and Everett Gallery in Boston later that year. In 1884, Hassam married Kathleen Maude Doane. The couple lived in Boston until the spring of 1886, when they left for Europe. In Paris, Hassam studied figure painting at the Académie Julian, and exhibited his work at the Salons of 1887 and 1888. In 1889 the Hassams returned to the United States and settled in New York. Hassam assisted in founding the New York Watercolor Club and began to exhibit with the Society of American Artists. Hassam was also the founding member of The Ten, an influential group of American artists of the early 20th century and was instrumental in promoting impressionism to dealers, collectors, and museums.
During the 1890s and the following two decades, Hassam spent his summers painting throughout New England. A prolific and industrious artist, Hassam painted numerous scenes of both the city and the countryside. Many of his early street scenes of Boston, Paris, and New York, with their reflections of wet pavement or of gaslight on the snow, demonstrated his talent for capturing the effects of light and atmosphere.

Throughout his career Hassam received numerous awards and prizes and his work was exhibited throughout the country. Prior to his death in 1935, Hassam arranged to bequeath all the paintings remaining in his studio to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. According to his wish they were sold to establish a fund for the purchase of American works to be donated to museums.

Hassam’s painting *Washington Arch, Spring* is a perfect example of one the artist’s most distinctive themes—the city. Hassam enjoyed the challenge of capturing the activity of the street as well as the charm of the tree-lined avenues. Hassam saw the streets of New York in the same eye as the Paris boulevards and preferred to capture the more elegant side of New York life. The arch was located at the end of Fifth Avenue and references the Arc d’Triomphe in Paris. The New York Arch, designed by Stanford White, celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of George Washington’s inauguration.
Grade level: Middle School (Grades 6–8)

Subjects: Visual arts, language arts

Lesson Summary
Students learn about artist Childe Hassam and explore his urban landscape paintings. Students will identify how the cities in which they live reflect the culture, human needs, values and ideals of its inhabitants. They will create plans for an ideal city based on journal observations and ideas.

Learning Objectives
Students will:
- Learn about the artist Childe Hassam and document details from his painting Washington Arch, Spring.
- Students will explore their own city and document details related to architecture, transportation, support systems, and landscape in student journals. Students will comment on decisions for city design and why they are important.
- Students will design plans for their ideal city incorporating ideas from their journals.

Materials
- About the Artist information sheet
- Image of Childe Hassam’s Washington Arch, Spring
- Student Worksheet
- Student journals
- Pencils
- Additional paper for diagrams as needed

Preparation
Teachers should be familiar with the artist Childe Hassam and provide additional examples of his work reflecting his style, technique, and subject matter. Provide additional examples of urban landscapes (can be different mediums). Teachers should be able to provide points for discussion about city design and distinguishing features. Discuss how to document visual experiences and ideas in student journals and define expectations of worksheet and summary discussions.
Instruction

**Review artist and his work with students.**
Have students look at the art work *Washington Arch, Spring* by Childe Hassam and discuss what they can learn about the city from the details the artist includes.

If the painting had been painted today, what would be different? Would they like to live in this city?

**Distribute journals for students to document observations.**
Student journals can be purchased or simple bound books created by the students.

**Review assignment with students.**
Document any observations during travels throughout the city. Note significant architecture (modern or classic), roadways and transportation systems, landscape and green spaces, support services including airports, hospitals, electric and water supply centers. Ask them to include ideas that they feel are good and challenges in the city structure and design. Encourage students to photograph or sketch significant features that they observe.

**Distribute Worksheet with ideas for observation and survey.**
Worksheet will provide general ideas to include in notes for city planning and can be used to organize final ideas.

**Share results of city observations.**
Allow time for students to gather observations from exploration of the city (a week). Divide students into groups and assign an area of the worksheet to each group. Students should share their ideas for that section and present final suggestions. Graph on a white board the ideas for each group. Discuss the results. Collect student worksheets.

**Extension activities and resources**
Create three-dimensional models of the ideal city using cardboard boxes, poster board, and miscellaneous art materials.
Provide disposable cameras to students to document city features. Create a visual map with the class using highlights that students observed. Black butcher paper can be utilized as a backdrop.
In each section below, list final ideas from your student journal. Provide detail on city features that were positive and negative (opportunity for revision/redesign).

**Landscape**
Discuss the parks, green spaces, public art, access to water.

**Architecture**
Types of buildings, are they contemporary or classic in design? Are they new or old—are they in good condition?

**Cultural/entertainment venues**
Discuss the museums, aquariums, concert halls, and sports stadiums. Are they easy to visit? Do you like the programs they offer?

**Transportation/roadways**
Discuss travel throughout the city – how people travel (bus, taxi, cars, bicycles). Are the roads marked well? Is there a train station or large airport?

**Support services**
Discuss hospitals, schools, electric and water supply centers. Are these designed well and/or they in good locations?