

Vanport and the Vanport Mosaic

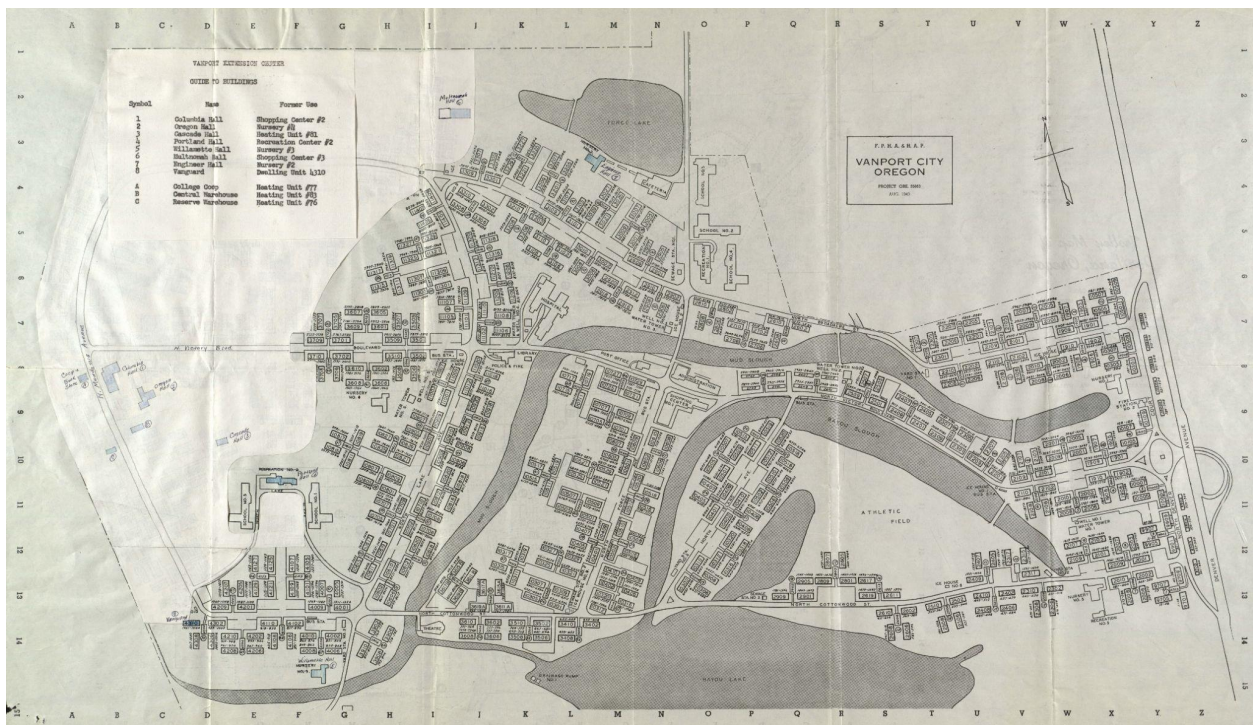
EDUCATIONAL GOALS / STANDARDS

Common Core

- TH:Cn11.1.6: Identify universal themes or common social issues and express them through a drama/theatre work.
- TH:Re8.1.6: Explain how artists make choices based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.
- TH:Re8.1.8: Analyze how cultural perspectives influence the evaluation of a drama/theatre work.
- TH:Re9.1.6: Identify a specific audience or purpose for a drama/theatre work.

CONTEXT PIECE (For educator to read before doing the activities)

Map of Vanport



This is a map of Vanport that students could look at and compare to a map of the modern area in Portland for some context as Vanport's history.

- Resources:

- <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/03/02/389482158/the-time-nature-and-racism-teamed-up-to-wipe-out-a-whole-town>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/vanport-oregon-how-countrys-largest-housing-project-vanished-day-180954040/?no-ist>
- It was illegal for Black Americans to live in Portland until 1926, but in the 1940s, WWII caused a labor shortage that drew a migration of Black Americans from the South.
- Black Americans needed housing, so Vanport was built in 1942 as temporary housing.
 - It was underfunded and overcrowded.
- In 1948, a dam blocking the Columbia River burst and major flooding began, flooding that the city decided not to tell residents about. They also chose not to evacuate the city, causing the town to be entirely wiped out.

History of the Vanport Mosaic

- Resources:
 - <https://www.vanportmosaic.org/>
- The Vanport Mosaic is a theater/performance group that focuses on memory activism.

As a goal, we want to place the students in both the time and physical space in which *Walking Through Portland with a Panther* takes place. We hope to do so using our two proposed activities. To situate the students in the time necessary to understand both the Vanport Mosaic project and the performance itself, it's important to allow the students to really engage with their own personal history and community and those of their peers. This is essential to the idea of memory activism, a core tenant of both the Vanport Mosaic and Mr. Kent Ford's Walking Tour. In order to understand our current cultural and historical context, students will think about times and spaces that are important to them and their communities, and from there they will learn how to apply this experience to their analysis of *Walking Through Portland With A Panther*.

WARMUP (~2-3 minutes)

Students will take turns practicing active listening. Students will turn to their neighbors to make groups of two. Let them decide who will talk first. They will take turns talking for one minute responding to the following prompt:

- Share a way in which a community that you are a part of (Can be a place or group of people. Examples include your hometown, school, a group of people you spend time with) is misperceived. What is this misperception? How does it affect the community? What information would you want to share to clear it up?

“HISTORY OF PORTLAND” ACTIVITY (25-30 minutes)

This activity seeks to situate students within **spaces** in their Portland community. What spaces matter the most to you? What spaces do you remember from *Walking Through Portland With a Panther*?

1. Make a timeline of your own history of Portland, using the space **above** the line. Pay attention to your family’s history and your own time in Portland. When did your family arrive in Portland? What city events have you participated in? What communities in Portland are important to you, and when did you learn about them? When did you meet the people most important to you in Portland? Feel free to add illustrations. Be ready to share your timeline with your classmates. [10 minutes]

2. Add the following events to your timeline, placing them below the line. Feel free to add illustrations and discuss with classmates. [5 Minutes]

1942: The construction of Vanport City begins

children each day. The FBI begins tracking Portland Panther Party members.

1948: The Columbia River floods, displacing thousands of Vanport City residents

1970: The Portland Black Panther Party opens a free medical clinic and dental clinic

1969: The Portland Black Panther Party is founded and begins their breakfast program, feeding over a hundred

1979: The Portland Black Panther Party closes their clinics and disband

3. What do you notice about your previous timeline in comparison to the events you just added? Is there any overlap? Discuss with your neighbor, paying attention to what could be added to your timeline, and how the inclusion of Vanport City and the Portland Black Panther Party changes it. [5 Minutes]

4. Add more history to your timeline. Use your device to access some of the following sources for firsthand accounts of the events you added:

[Smithsonian Magazine | How Oregon's Second Largest City Vanished in a Day](#)

[VANPORT MOSAIC | "Sting Like A Bee": Kent Ford and the Portland Black Panthers](#)

[Oregon Encyclopedia | Black Panthers in Portland](#)

How can the events you originally added be expanded upon? What relationships do the events you just added have with your preexisting events? Use both sides of the timeline, and feel free to add illustrations and collaborate with your neighbor. [10 Minutes]

“MAKE YOUR OWN WALKING TOUR” ACTIVITY (~30 minutes)

Overview: In order for the students to gain more insight into the motivation and production decisions behind the performance of *Walking Through Portland with a Panther*, they will partially emulate it by creating their own “mini-tour” of a geographical community to which the student belongs (city, school district, neighborhood, etc.).

Required Materials (for each student)

- 1-2 pieces of blank paper
- A writing / drawing utensil (If you wish to extend the amount of time given to this activity, you could also provide additional artistic implements)

Part 1 - Drawing a Community (~25 Minutes)

Step 1 - Pick a community (2-3 minutes): Instruct the students to brainstorm communities they are a part of. These should be communities rooted in space (based in geographical location and/or associated with specific places. Examples include cities, school campuses/districts, town neighborhoods, etc.). Have them think of several of these “communities rooted in space” and locations within them they think are important. If they are thinking about a city, for example, important locations could be parks, libraries, town halls, monuments, etc. This list does not have to include the community they talked about in the warmup. At the end of the brainstorm, they should pick the community they think they have the most to talk about, as they will be describing this community in-depth for the rest of the activity.

Step 2 - Draw the community (~15 minutes):

- Before starting (<1 minute): Remind the students that this activity should be drawing inspiration from *Walking Through Portland with a Panther* and the goals of the Vanport Mosaic. That is, as they draw their communities, they should be striving to share information about that community that they believe to be important to understanding that community and its history that newcomers or outsiders to the community may have misconceptions about or have trouble learning.
- Drawing (13-15 minutes): Instruct the students to begin drawing or listing important locations in the community they chose. They may also put short notes on their drawings of the location’s significance. The drawings they are making

are not meant to be accurate maps or super-detailed drawings. This activity (as described here) moves very quickly, so the drawings and notes will need to be small, fast, and simple. You can guide their thinking by giving the prompts listed below (verbally, written, etc.) at the start or throughout this time. It is okay if one location fits more than one of these prompts. In fact, tell the students to take special note of the ones that do. Reassure the students that these are just *prompts* to guide their thinking, not strict assignments: Students do not need to provide answers for every prompt if they are struggling to think of relevant locations and they should not feel overly pressured to “keep up” with the prompts.

- Draw locations that are of personal significance to *you*. What places do you go to frequently and why?
- Draw locations that your friends and family frequently go to.
- Draw locations that might be considered “public centers”, or public spaces that many people visit but don’t typically stay for longer than a few hours. Examples include parks, malls, town halls, cafeterias, libraries, etc.
- Draw locations where large public gatherings take place or have taken place. What kinds of gatherings are/were they?
- Draw locations that have a strong reputation or special significance among members of the community. What kinds of reputations do they have? Do all community members feel the same way? How did these reputations come to be earned? Do you think these locations deserve the reputations they do?
- Draw locations that have different reputations between people inside and outside the community (this may generally apply to the community as a whole). What are the differences? Why do you think these differences exist? What effect do these differences have on the community and its members?
- Draw locations where events took place that community members generally believe were beneficial to the community and its members. What were the events? What effect did they have?

- Draw locations where events took place that community members generally believe were detrimental to the community and its members. What were the events? What effect did they have?

Step 3 - Planning a Tour (5 minutes): Now that the students have a picture of significant locations in their community, instruct them to think and write notes about how they might give a “walking tour” of it to an audience of people unfamiliar with the community. Below are some prompts to guide their thinking.

- Which locations do you believe are the most important to understanding the community as a whole? What is the information would you want your hypothetical audience to know?
- Which locations do you believe have the strongest reputations and/or misconceptions about them? How would you approach talking about these reputations and how would you want to overturn the misconceptions?
- What order would you want to tour the locations if you didn't have to worry about travel time? Is there significance to this order?

Part 2 - Sharing and Touring Communities (5-6 Minutes)

Instruct the students to get into pairs (or groups of three if there's an odd number of students) and begin sharing their communities and tour ideas one student at a time (1.5-2 minutes each). They should not be *giving* their tour, but should rather describe their ideas and thought process behind the locations they drew and the plans for their tour. If students in a group happened to have chosen the same or overlapping communities, have them compare and contrast their locations and tour and share the reasoning for their different choices. Below are some questions to guide the discussion:

- Before this activity, did you think of community geographically? Would you have the same answer after completing this activity?
- What does community mean to me?
- Think about place and location, specifically. How do we connect place or space to history?
- Why is it important to think about the physical aspects of a community?