

Activity Ideas for Grades 7 & 8 *Catholics in New York 1808-1946*



Catholics in New York 1808 to 1946 at the Museum of the City of New York explores the social and political history of the diverse group of people who established the formidable Catholic presence in New York. This exhibition, the first of its kind, traces their growth from a tiny religious minority to a powerful force in the city and shows how, by organizing to build their own communities, institutions, and political organizations, Catholics reshaped the fabric of life in all five boroughs.

We encourage you to schedule your students for an educator-led school program; however self-guided visits are also available. This sheet contains ideas for activities that can take place before, during, or after your self-guided visit to the exhibition. Melinda Greenblatt, Program Director of Library Connections at the Archdiocese of New York, was tremendously helpful in providing us with these ideas. Self-guided activity worksheets are also available upon request.

To schedule an educator-led or self-guided visit please call 212 534 1672 ext 3334.

- ▶ Choose three artifacts from the exhibit and find related newspaper articles. Connect the artifacts to a historical event of the same era, a famous person, or an article about a neighborhood, or a particular immigrant group. Write a short piece explaining the connections between each article and the object from the exhibit.
- ▶ In small groups, create a mural that compares and contrasts the life of a child growing up in New York during one of the decades included in the exhibit and your own life growing up in the 21st century. Include elements of family life, school activities, holidays, and recreational activities. Identify the earlier time period by depicting specific artifacts from the exhibit in your mural. Try to include similar items from the 21st century. Create a museum label for your mural.
- ▶ Many historical issues are woven into the exhibit: early prejudice against Catholic immigrants, the growth of Catholic institutions including schools and hospitals, the rise of Catholic political figures, and others. Working with other students, choose a topic that two teams can debate. Citing specific objects and texts from the exhibit (and doing additional research), hold a debate. Other students can ask questions.
- ▶ Compare the history of the Catholics in New York with that of another religious group.
- ▶ You are a cultural reporter for the New York Times. Write a review of the exhibit, describing the overall theme of the exhibit and selected artifacts that you feel strongly about. Write about whether you would recommend this exhibit to others or not, and give specific reasons for your decision.