

WE CAN BUILD A BEAUTIFUL CITY

Use this activity to explore storytelling through visual design, soundscaping and shadow play—essential elements of theater and film.

Materials Needed: chart paper, cardboard boxes, classroom objects, markers, flashlights, objects for sound creation (paper, water bottles, wooden blocks, etc.), phone or tablet for recording



1. Tell students that they are going to construct their very own magical city in the classroom! Before getting started, ask some guiding questions like: *What kinds of people or things are in your city? What qualities or elements would your city need to be magical? What is life like in this city? Are there festivals? A secret underground lair or hidden portal to another world?* You can have students discuss as a class or begin to draw or write out their ideas.
2. Using repurposed boxes and classroom objects, begin constructing a city! Students can work in small groups to design and build different areas: homes, bridges, rivers and other outdoor spaces, and fantastical elements like floating towers or glowing magical gardens.
3. Then, introduce the concept of soundscapes and foley (the art of creating sound effects using the everyday objects). Ask questions like: *What sounds will help bring this city to life?* Experiment with different materials: crinkling paper for the wind, tapping pencils for footsteps or playing around with a container of water to create the sound of a river or rain. Layer the sounds together to create the sound of the city.
4. Now, layer in light and shadow play. Using flashlights, cast shadows onto the city and explore how different angles change its look and mood. Create a sunrise, a thunderstorm or a mysterious moonlit nightscape.
5. Finally, gather as a group and reflect on the world you've built!



Reflection Questions:

What choices did you make to bring your dream city to life, and how did they change once we built it together?

How did using sound and shadow transform the way you experienced the city?

If you could step inside this city for a day, what would you do first, and why?