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Advertisement for The Pope Manufacturing Company, 1886.

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This curriculum and a teacher’s guide will soon be available on our website at

Click on “Fourth Grade Curriculum” for these and other online publications.
GLOSSARY

acetylene: A gas made of calcium carbide and water. Early bicycle lamps had a cake of calcium carbide and a place for water. When the lamp was turned on, some of the water dripped onto the cake and a gas was formed, which made a bright white light.

branch: A place that is part of a larger company.

cobblestones: Stones used for paving streets. Cobblestone paving was expensive, so it was mostly done in wealthy neighborhoods. The stones helped to drain water when it rained, while unpaved dirt roads got muddy.

commercial: Having to do with a private business.

cyclist: Someone who rides a bicycle.

endorse: To support; to give approval.

exhibition: A show; a display of things for people to see.

leisure: A time for playing.

Madison Square Garden: A place in Manhattan where shows and sports events are held. Madison Square Garden was rebuilt four times. It got its name because the original building was located on Madison Square in Manhattan, at 26th Street and Madison Avenue.

oil lamp: A lamp fueled by lighting a wick placed in oil.

pedestrian: A person who travels by walking.

propose: Suggest.

reckless: Wild and careless.

restrictions: Rules forbidding certain actions.

rut: A groove in a road.

Speaker: Head of the City Council. The Speaker is also a Council Member, elected from a district. He or she is then elected by other Council Members to speak on their behalf.

trolley: A kind of train car that runs on tracks in the street. The very first trolleys were horse-drawn. Later they ran by electricity. Trolleys could not pull to the side of the road because of their tracks, so getting on and off was dangerous. Passengers had to get off on special islands in the middle of the road, then dodge traffic to get to the sidewalk.

Answer key to word scramble puzzle on page 7.


Caption: A Velocipede Riding School
INTRODUCTION

SAFE RIDING
LAWS AND THE CITY COUNCIL

What do New York City government and bicycles have in common? Bicycles are only one of the many kinds of vehicles used by New Yorkers every day. In a city as large as ours, it is important that all people share the streets and sidewalks in a safe and responsible manner. Making decisions about public safety and transportation are two of the many duties of city government. City government is made up of The City Council and the Mayor, who work together to create laws that are meant to improve the lives of all New Yorkers. But making laws is not an easy process. The lawmakers have to listen to many opinions from people and organizations before voting on what action to take.

In this booklet you will learn about some of the ways our city government works by looking at bicycle laws and how they affect all New Yorkers: bicyclists, pedestrians, drivers and passengers. As you do the lessons, you will see some words in bold print. The meaning of these words can be found in the Glossary on the inside back cover of this booklet.

Council Members at the Puerto Rican Day Parade, 2002. Some of the Members shown marching behind the banner, from left to right, are Gale Brewer, Maria Baez, Joel Rivera, Gifford Miller and Margarita Lopez.
LESSON 1

MAKING LAWS IN NEW YORK CITY

Every New Yorker has a Council Member who works to make sure that the people’s rights and wishes are listened to. People who wish to propose a new law, or change an existing law, can write to their Council Members. (To find out how to contact your Council Member, see page 16 of this booklet.)

How does The City Council work to make laws? The City Council is the legislative (law-making) branch of city government. The Council is made up of 51 members from the five boroughs of the city. The City of New York is divided into areas called “districts.” Each Council Member represents a different district. Council Members are usually elected every four years. However, every twenty years the city changes the boundaries of the districts because of population changes. When this happens, two elections are held for two-year terms.

Council Members work in committees to discuss how to solve problems in our city. Some of these committees are Education, Public Safety, and Transportation. These committees hold “hearings,” public meetings in which people can speak about problems in the city and how to solve them. If the members of a committee want to pass a law, after they approve it, they must present it to the full Council of 51, who then vote on it. At this point, the law is called a “bill.” If there is a majority vote to pass it, the bill then goes to the Mayor. The Mayor can either sign the bill, making it a law, or “veto” (vote against) the bill. If the Mayor vetoes the bill, the Council can still make it into a law if two-thirds of the Council vote for it.

On the next page is a copy of a New York City bill. This bill proposes that anyone over 14 years old should wear a helmet when riding a bike. Today, there is already a state law saying that children under 14 have to wear helmets. So, if this bill were to be made into a law, it would mean that everyone in New York City, no matter what age, would have to wear a helmet while cycling. This bill has not been made into a law. Look at this document to answer the questions.

On what date was this bill introduced? ________________________________

Name three Council Members who helped work on this bill. ________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

What committee were they on? ________________________________

According to this bill, who would have to wear helmets while riding a bicycle?

1. ________________________________

and

2. ________________________________
THE COUNCIL
The City of New York

Int. No. 213  February 26, 1994

Introduced by Council Members Leflate, Dunn, Marshall and McCabe, and Council Members Cruz, Foster, Perretti, Pournara and Rivera—read and referred to the Committee on Public Safety.

A LOCAL LAW

To amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring operators and passengers of bicycles to wear protective headgear.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Title 10 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding thereto a new section 10-161 to read as follows:

§ 10-161 Passengers and operators of bicycles to wear protective headgear. a. (1) No person, fourteen or more years of age, shall operate or ride as a passenger on a bicycle unless such person is wearing a helmet meeting the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI Z 90.4 Bicycle Helmet Standards) or the Snell Memorial Foundation's standards for protective headgear for use in bicycling. For the purposes of this subdivision wearing a helmet means having a helmet of good fit fastened securely upon the head with the helmet straps.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "bicycle" shall mean a two- or three-wheeled device upon which a person or persons may ride, propelled by human power through a belt, a chain or gears, with such wheels on a tandem or tricycle, except that it shall not include such a device having solid tires and intended for use only on a sidewalk by pre-teenage children.

(3) This section shall be enforced by the police department and the department of parks and recreation.

b. (1) Any person who violates the provisions of subdivision a of this section shall pay a civil fine not to exceed fifty dollars, which may be recovered in a proceeding before the environmental control board.
LESSON 2

THE EARLY BICYCLE CRAZE

Like today, bicycles were popular with New Yorkers back in the nineteenth century (1800s). The first two-wheeled riding machine used by New Yorkers was the “velocipede,” invented around 1861. Velocipede means “fast foot.” Most velocipedes were made entirely of wood, which was not unusual at the time. Wood was a common material used for making many things in America because there were still so many forests. Riding this machine was not always comfortable. The ride was often bumpy because many of the streets at that time were paved with cobblestones. So the velocipede became popularly known as the “boneshaker.”

In 1870, a new machine appeared, known as the “high-wheel,” and was the first to be called a “bicycle,” meaning “two wheel.” The high-wheel bicycle had a very large front wheel. It was made of metal and was more comfortable to ride than the velocipede because it had hard rubber tires. The large front wheel allowed the rider to go a long distance each time the wheel turned, but the problem was that if the wheel hit a stone or rut in the road, the bicycle would tip over. Eventually, bicycles were designed so that the wheels were the same size. This design was just as good as the high-wheel but was safer.

Bicycles, or “wheels,” were everywhere. They allowed people to get fresh air and exercise, and also provided a form of transportation that was affordable to the middle class. They also allowed women a new kind of freedom. Women in the nineteenth century spent a lot of time working at home, but with bicycles they became more active outdoors. Bicycle schools offered lessons in how to ride. Stores advertised special kinds of clothing just for cyclists, who were known as wheelemen and wheelwomen. Bicycle clubs were formed. Racing became popular. Bicycle exhibitions, held in places like Madison Square Garden, drew large audiences. New York, like the rest of America, was experiencing a “bicycle craze.”

Cyclists join in a parade on Jamaica Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, around 1885.
Fill in the blanks below by unscrambling the letters to the following words.

1. The word “___ ___ ___ ___ ___” means “two wheel.”  yleicbc
2. Riding early bicycles was not always ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ mactboolfre
3. The velocipede was known as the “___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___”  kenohbrse
4. During the bicycle craze, racing was ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ rluppoa
5. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ was taught in bicycle schools.  girdin
6. Bicycle ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ were held at Madison Square Garden.  hilbexnosi
7. Streets in the 1800s were often ___ ___ ___ ___ with cobblestones.  evadp
8. One reason why bicycles were so popular was because they were affordable to the ___ ___ ___ ___ class.  dlemdi
9. Bicycle ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ were made first of wood, then rubber.  resti
10. Early bicycles were called ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ __ eleswh

Now, use the circled letters from the word scramble to find the missing word in the picture’s caption.

A ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Riding School

Answers are on the inside back cover of this booklet, underneath the glossary words.
LESSON 3

THE HORSE THAT DOESN’T EAT

In the nineteenth century, most people traveled either by walking or by horse. Before the invention of the automobile, horses were the main power supply for public transportation—fire engines, buses (called omnibuses), ambulances, and commercial vehicles were all horse-drawn. Horses were also used for private transportation—the horse-drawn carriage. This is why engines today are still measured in horsepower.

With the invention of the bicycle, people were given an extra choice for transportation. Even though the bicycle was first invented for leisure, it was also a new way to travel. The large advertisement on the next page describes the bicycle as “An ever saddled horse which eats nothing.” This nineteenth century ad, as well as the smaller one, are from the Pope Manufacturing Company. The Pope Company was located in Boston but also had a branch in New York City. The large ad shows men riding high-wheel bicycles, with horse-drawn carriages in the background. Then, like now, bicycle models had names. This ad is for the Columbia bicycle.

Also like today, companies often asked famous sports figures to endorse their products, as we see Michael Jordan in modern ads for Nike sneakers. The Pope Company wanted to let people know it made bicycles of such high quality that cyclists who used them in races got excellent results. So the ad has the names of well known cyclists and what they were able to accomplish on a bicycle manufactured by Pope.

Look carefully at the ad to answer the following questions.

If C. Terront rode 363 miles in 26 hours, how many miles did he travel in 13 hours? __________ miles.

C. Waller traveled 1404 miles in 6 days. If he had continued traveling for another three days, how many miles would he have covered in total? ______ miles.

How far and how fast did G.T Francis travel on Chestnut Hill in Boston? He traveled _______________ in __________________________.

At this rate, how long would it take him to travel half a mile? __________________________.
Both of these nineteenth century ads are for the high-wheel bicycle.
Lesson 4

BICYCLE SAFETY, THEN AND NOW

Traveling through New York City a hundred years ago meant sharing the sidewalks and streets just as we do today. There were pedestrians on the sidewalks, and in the streets were horse-drawn vehicles, trolleys, and even some horse-less carriages—the very early automobile. In addition, there were bicycles. So just like today, it was important then to have laws so that everyone could share the streets in a way that was safe and fair to everyone.

On June 25, 1887, New York State passed a law saying that bicycles and tricycles should be treated as if they were carriages. This means that cyclists had the same rights as anyone driving a horse-drawn carriage, and that they also had to follow all the same rules. Bicycles, like other vehicles, had to ride on the right-hand side of the road when meeting other vehicles coming in the opposite direction. They also had to be “roadworthy”—in good condition—so that they didn’t break down and cause accidents and injuries.

People in the past had many of the same concerns about bicycle safety that we do today. For example, there was concern about being run over by speeding cyclists, so reckless riding was forbidden. Newspaper articles from the time tell of reckless riding and how dangerous it was. Cyclists also had to have lamps on their bicycles when riding after sunset so that others could see them coming. (Today, cyclists also must have lights on their bicycles when riding at night.) The advertisement on the next page shows what early lamps looked like. The lamp in this ad was powered by a fuel called acetylene. The ad says this lamp is better than oil lamps.

Why do you think gas and oil lamps might be dangerous? ________________________________

Name two of the five reasons in the ad that says why using the Calcium King was better than using an oil lamp.

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

Why do you think it was called the Calcium King? (Hint: Look at the definition of “acetylene” in the glossary.) ____________________________________________

The ad says the Calcium King had 100 candlepower. Candlepower was a way of measuring how bright a lamp was and is a unit of measurement that is still used today. Why do you think the word “candlepower” is used in this way? ____________________________________________

__________________________________________
Bicycle and tricycle with lamps in Central Park, Manhattan, 1886.

An ad for an early bicycle lamp, 1898.
Below is a document showing some of the laws for bicycles in New York City in 1913. These laws are under the heading of Article IV. They have to do with (circle one)

- cycling in parks
- using the streets safely
- walking your dog

Three sections from Article IV are shown here, section 460, 461, and 462. Section 460 says that ________________ is forbidden. This means that the rider's feet must be on the pedals at all time.

Section 461 says that ________________ riding is forbidden. This means no fancy riding of any sort, including taking your hands off the handlebars.

Section 462 says that no cyclist can carry a child under ________________ years old on a bicycle.

Now, compare this document with the modern law below. This law was passed by The City Council in 2002 and signed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. It describes the restrictions of riding bicycles on sidewalks in New York City and explains the penalties for breaking this law. (You will learn more about this law in Lesson 5.) What do these laws from two different time periods have in common?
NO RIDING ON SIDEWALKS

TWO VIEWPOINTS

Bicycles cannot be ridden on sidewalks anywhere in New York City today by people over fourteen years old. If you are over fourteen and ride a bicycle on the sidewalk, you could be fined (have to pay the city) up to $100. If someone on the sidewalk gets hurt, your fine would be even higher and you could be sent to jail. Also, just for riding on the sidewalk, your bicycle could be taken away from you and you would need to pay the Police Department a fee for removing and storing your bike.

Why was this law passed? Just like in the past, some people were worried about reckless riding. They felt that too many cyclists were riding too fast and too close to pedestrians. This was dangerous because pedestrians could be knocked down and injured. The problem was not just people riding for fun, but also delivery people who delivered food and other items by bicycle. While this might not be a problem in smaller, less populated villages, it is in a large city like New York, where so many people have to share the streets and sidewalks.

However, not everyone agreed that this law should be passed. Some felt it was unfair to force cyclists to ride in the streets. The City Council listened to the opinions of many New Yorkers before they voted on what they believed was best for the people of the city.

On the next two pages are letters written by two New Yorkers to The City Council. Read them to answer the questions. As you read, list the words you do not understand on a piece of paper. At the end of the lesson, look the words up in a dictionary and write down their meanings.

A boy riding a bicycle in Astoria, Queens, 1922.
June 20, 1994

Hon. Peter Vallone, Speaker
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Dear Sir:

In support of #104 re bicycles:

Hopefully bill #104 can become a New York City law prohibiting the riding of bicycles on sidewalks, unless the walkways are specifically marked as available for them.

I'm continually having to jump aside as food delivery bicycles zoom toward me on the sidewalk or, they pass me from behind without sound and at such speed that I'm just grateful I didn't step sideways by 5” into their path, as I moved sideways to look into a store window.

Several days ago about 90 people were on a street corner with me, waiting to cross the street. Just as the light changed to green a man on a bicycle came rapidly across the street and onto the sidewalk in the midst of us. He then kept cycling the length of the block on the sidewalk. The people around me had to scatter to keep from being hit. He continued along the sidewalk, where other people also had to keep moving out of his way as he proceeded. This continued into the next block's walking area too, until I could no longer see him.

It's bad enough having bikes come at you the wrong direction on a one-way street, when you don't expect danger from that direction. But if pedestrians can't walk safely on sidewalks, where else can they walk? I asked a police sergeant whether there is any law about this, and he said he could only act regarding use of a commercial delivery bicycle. All bicycles should be required to use streets, rather than sidewalks, and have sound a warning bell or device if coming the wrong way on a one-way street.

Again, hope the pending bill can be passed, to attend to these kinds of abuses.

Sincerely,

M. Joseph Scott

Is New Yorker #1 “for” or “against” the law that says bicycles cannot be ridden on sidewalks?

For Against circle one

What words would you use to describe how he feels?


How many years ago was this letter written? ____________________________

How many years later was the law passed? (Hint: See page 10) ____________________________
Honorabe Peter Vallone  
City Council  
City Hall  
NY, NY 10067  

Dear Speaker Vallone,  

I’m writing this letter because I’m extremely alarmed about a bill my council member Charles Millard is sponsoring in city council (Bill 103). As one of his constituents, I do not support this bill. I feel that unless the city has bike lanes on every street and until they are respected and enforced, that it is against my constitutional right to have a law that will confiscate my bike and fine me if I’m riding on a sidewalk. Passing this bill doesn’t get to the root of the problem. It doesn’t fix why cyclists are riding on the sidewalk. This is the problem we need to focus on. As a year-round bicycle commuter, it is always unsafe for me to be in the street. I myself have been hit by a car twice, (thank goodness I wasn’t hurt but my bicycle was) so I know that we need to make our streets safer. I’m sick and tired of politicians in this city pitting pedestrians and cyclists against each other. We should be joining forces against the cars in this city that create the chaos. It is our civic responsibility to do everything in our power to make cycling in NYC safe. We need to make it safer on the streets for cyclists so that we never need to ride on the sidewalk. This is the way of the future and the city needs to wake up. I’m tired of cars always having top priority, especially when only 25% of the people living in NYC own cars.

Please don’t let the political ambition of one city council member ruin it for the cyclists in New York City, especially when he has no interest in this issue but is just concerned about finally getting a bill passed through city council.

I hope you vote this bill and don’t allow it to pass through city council.

Thank you,

[Signature]

Carole S. Cohen

---

Is New Yorker #2 “for” or “against” the sidewalk law?  

**For**  

**Against** circle one

Give one reason for her opinion. ________________________________

What does she suggest the city should do to make riding in the streets safer? ________________________________

Do you think the law that forbids riding bicycles on sidewalks is fair? ________________________________

Why or why not? ________________________________
LESSON 6

PARKS AND PATHS

Some areas of New York City today have bicycle lanes for safe cycling. Cyclists should use these lanes when they are available, especially in parks. Cyclists are not allowed to ride their bikes on the grass in any park, or on any path that is for pedestrians, or in any playground or sitting area. In other words, bicycles should only be ridden on bicycle paths.

The map on the next page shows part of the Rockaway area of Queens. This area is a beach, and is a national park, called the Gateway National Recreation Area. The solid lines on the map show where bicycle paths are. The dotted lines show where a cyclist should go while riding in the streets. Look carefully at the map to answer the questions.


Visitors to Jacob Riis Park enjoy an exercise program, 1934.
At the end of Rockaway Point Boulevard is a bike path. If you take this path, how far will you travel until you reach 169th Street? ________________________________

If you travel northwest on 169th Street, you will go over a bridge to Brooklyn. What is the name of the bridge? ________________________________

Can you ride your bicycle over this bridge? Yes No circle one

In what direction is Belle Harbor from the bridge? North South East West circle one

If you did not go over the bridge and continued riding the path, what park would you be passing along? ________________________________

Once you pass through the park, what street would you end up at? ________________________________

If you ride on Jacob Riis Boardwalk east to west and back again, how far will you have traveled? ________________________________
CONCLUSION

YOU AND YOUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Our city’s government, like that of the nation and state, is based on a democratic system. We vote to elect our leaders, and we help in the decision-making process. We can write to our government representatives, we can hold town meetings, we can march in protest. Because of the type of government we live under, we, as citizens, have power to make changes in our neighborhoods, in our cities, and in our lives.

When people want to propose a new law, or want to change an existing law, they must first contact their Council Members. Remember, New York City is divided into areas called “districts.” If you have a concern, you can write to the Council Member from your district. You can find out what district you live in, and who your Council Member is, by going to The New York City Council web site, www.council.nyc.ny.us. Click on “Council Members.” Then click on “Who Represents Me?”

After you find out who your Council Member is, you can write to him or her. In your letter you can:

• Explain to your Council Member why you think an existing law is unfair.
  OR
• Suggest making a change in your neighborhood, such as turning a vacant lot into a public garden, or renaming a busy street after someone you think has done a lot for the community.
  OR
• Ask your Council Member to help make your school or neighborhood a safer place.
  OR
• Invite your Council Member to visit your class to discuss a problem in your neighborhood and ways to solve that problem.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg signs the bill for New York City Taxpayers Bill of Rights. Seated to his left is Council Speaker Gifford Miller. Standing are, from left to right, Council Members David Weprin, Diana Reyna, and Eric Gioia, and General Council at the Department of Consumer Affairs, Susan Koflapian.
BICYCLE RIDER HURT ON JAMAICA AVENUE.

WHEELEMEN SPEED THROUGH THE THROUGHFARE IN A HUSTLE.

ROADS ARE CRITICIZED.

It is claimed that they are operated in a way that is dangerous to life and limb.

Headline from The Brooklyn Eagle, 1901.

Paul Geipel and his two children, Astoria, Queens, 1895.

BICYCLE KNOCKS DOWN CHILD.

Thomas Hartley, 6 years old, of 193 Ave. C, while crossing the street, near his home last evening, had his skull fractured by being knocked down by a bicycle ridden by James Garrett, 13 years old, of 16 Indiam Street. The child was taken to the Eastern District Hospital.

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