

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

New York's Central Park

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the drawings and map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

During the 1800s, Frederick Law Olmsted pioneered the use of natural landscaping in urban parks. He designed more than 80 public parks in Boston, Chicago, and other cities. In addition, Olmsted designed the grounds around the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.


Olmsted's lasting contribution, though, was the setting aside of natural areas in crowded cities. These areas gave urban residents places for recreation. To Olmsted, recreation meant walking in a pleasant environment. As he once said:

The main object and justification [of the park] is simply to produce a certain influence in the minds of people, and through this to make life in the city healthier and happier. The char-


acter of this influence is a poetic one and it is to be produced by means of scenes.

In 1858, Olmsted and the architect Calvert Vaux won a prize for their design of Central Park, an 843-acre oblong area in the center of Manhattan in New York City. Their design was unique for city parks in the United States. Rural scenery was the theme of the design. A screen of trees and shrubs around the park blocked the city from view. Traffic was routed through underground passes. A few small lakes were created. Avenues for carriages, bridle paths for horses, and an elaborate system of footpaths laced the park grounds. Central Park today remains an oasis amid concrete sprawl.


New York's Central Park




Park Construction, 1860

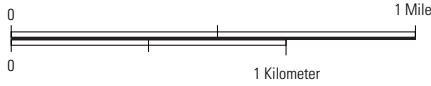


Central Park, 1894

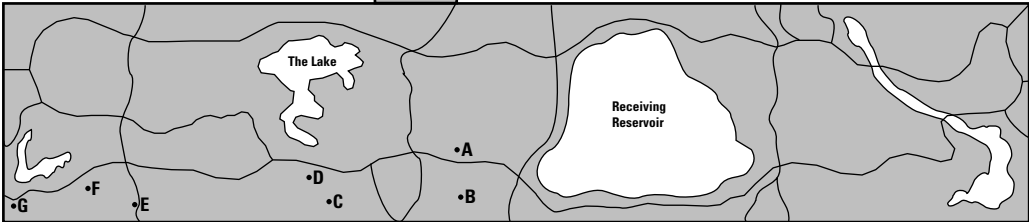


Central Park, today





- A Cleopatra's Needle
- B Metropolitan Museum of Art
- C Alice in Wonderland Statue
- D Hans Christian Andersen Statue
- E Children's Zoo
- F Zoo
- G General Sherman Statue
- H Hayden Planetarium
- I American Museum of Natural History



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. What did Olmsted believe was the purpose of parks? _____

2. Why do you think Olmsted is called the father of urban planning? _____

3. Using the pictures and text for reference, describe what was done to create the Central Park of today.

4. Categorize the types of attractions found in the park. _____

5. What are the dimensions of Central Park—not including the small section with locations H and I?

6. A person walking from locations D to A moves in what direction? _____

7. What legacy has Olmsted given to Americans? _____

8. What do you think is one thing that could be added to or taken away from Olmsted's Central Park plan that would improve the park?
