

## History at Home for Teens

### Weekly Project 3: Exploring Chicago's Neighborhoods—Pilsen

The neighborhood of [Pilsen](#) has a rich and diverse history. Beginning in the 1840s with Irish immigrants, many other European immigrants made their way to Chicago and settled in Pilsen, just southwest of downtown. Among these immigrants, Germans, Czechs, Poles, and Italians settled in Pilsen. The neighborhood is named after a city called Plzeň in Czechoslovakia, now known as the Czech Republic.

In the 1950s, as European immigration slowed down and existing residents began moving to other neighborhoods and the surrounding suburbs, immigrants from Latin America, predominantly Mexico, settled in Pilsen. These new residents faced many challenges, such as a lack of government assistance, social services, and bilingual educational, which spurred the establishment of different community initiatives like [Casa Aztlán](#) and [Benito Juarez Community Academy](#), among others.

Pilsen has also been a hub for the [Mexican muralist movement](#). The neighborhood's boundaries have become canvases for the growing effort to maintain vibrancy and culture within the predominantly Mexican neighborhood. Its buildings, alleyways, and even doors are places where artists blend their identities and culture to convey the different social issues and injustices that they face daily.

Murals have a strong history in Aztec and Mayan cultures. Their historical influence spread from Mexico in the 1920s and '30s as a way to educate the public. That spirit migrated to the walls of Pilsen, becoming a colorful form of expression for the people.

What is an issue that you are passionate about? If you could commission a mural to educate people about this issue, what would it look like?



The "Declaration of Immigration" mural in Pilsen by artist Salvador Jimenez and Yollocalli Students. Chicago, IL. 2006.

### Instructions:

- ◆ Identify the issue that you are passionate or care about.
- ◆ Check out this [gallery](#) of murals in Pilsen for inspiration.
- ◆ Get creative and draw/design your own mural! You can use any materials you have at home or even create a digital mural, using any paint and/or design application.
- ◆ Share them on social media or on our [Google Classroom](#) page.

To share with us, upload your creations using your phone, computer, or other device using the Google Classroom app. You can also share your story on social media (Twitter and Instagram @chicagomuseum, Facebook @chicagohistory) tagging us and using #historyathometeens!

**[All activities can be done from your phone! Just follow the blue hyperlinks to the materials/pages!](#)**

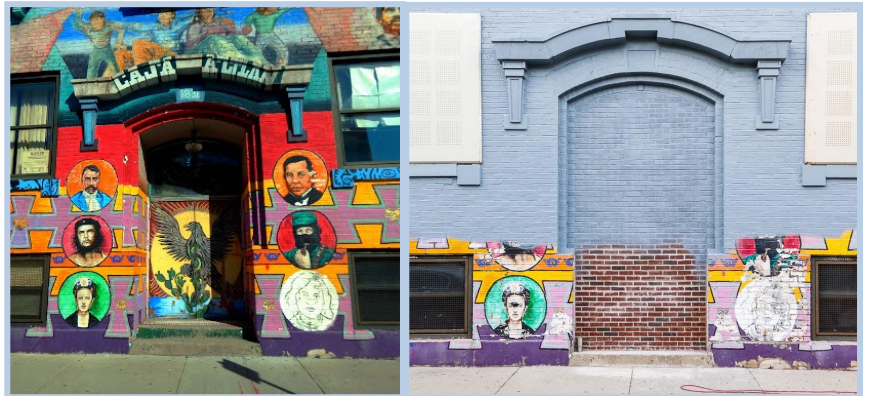
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### Additional Activity

#### Pilsen Streetscapes

Pilsen's rich history can be seen firsthand in the store fronts, [neo-Bohemian architecture](#) of buildings, and the vibrant murals that cover many of Pilsen's buildings. Over the years, some of these sights have changed, whether through community-centered redevelopment or large developer-led projects. The community's response to these changes has ranged from enthusiastic support to oppositional demonstrations. Many of the disagreements over the redevelopment of Pilsen, and many other neighborhoods, have been over the [displacement](#) of longtime, working-class residents who are pushed out of these neighborhoods because of rising rent and property values. In addition to the vibrant murals found throughout Pilsen, many of these same walls have art and signs that speak about this displacement, known as [gentrification](#).

The [redevelopment](#) of neighborhoods, predominantly working-class neighborhoods of color, is a greatly contested topic and one that can be seen play out over the years through its streetscapes. Casa Aztlán, at Eighteenth Street and Racine Avenue, became a clear example of the erasure of cultural history at the hands of redevelopment, as a large developer bought the building that housed the former [settlement house](#), Howell House. The developer planned to convert this history building into luxury, communal apartments and to paint over the mural that had been painted by local artists in the early 1970s.



**Casa Aztlan with the full mural (left) (Courtesy of Pilsen Alliance) and half-painted as it was remodeled (right) (Credit: Tim Arroyo)**

#### Instructions:

- ◆ Using the shots of Pilsen streetscapes, compare them to the current shots found through Google Maps street view, of those same streetscapes to see any changes and/or things that have remained the same.
- ◆ Use the Image Analysis Guide to help you compare the two shots.
- ◆ Answer the reflection questions on the back of the Image Analysis Guide.
- ◆ Click on the blue hyperlinks throughout the text to learn more about these topics!
- ◆ Check out this [video](#) to learn more about the cool features of Google Maps!
- ◆ Share your thoughts on the topic of gentrification and/or Pilsen with us!

#### Share with Us!

To share with us, upload your responses from your computer or from your phone through the Google Classroom App, through the submit assignment button. You can also share your creations on social media (Twitter and Instagram @chicagomuseum, Facebook @chicagohistory) tagging us and using the hashtag #historyathometeens!

**Streetscape #1**



Brubaker, C. William, 1981, Carpenter and 18th Street, Pilsen , C. William Brubaker Collection (University of Illinois at Chicago) [https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/u?uic\\_bru,1912](https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/u?uic_bru,1912)

**Streetscape #2**



Brubaker, C. William, 1981, 18th Street, Pilsen, C. William Brubaker Collection (University of Illinois at Chicago) [http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/u?/uic\\_bru,1954](http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/u?/uic_bru,1954)

**Streetscape #3**



**Komensky School , BHNC\_0033\_0233\_092.jpg, Seven Settlement Houses-Database of Photos (University of Illinois at Chicago), University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections and University Archives**

Streetscape #4



Teenagers gathering outside of Howell House, BHNC\_0040\_0274\_004.jpg, Seven Settlement Houses-Database of Photos (University of Illinois at Chicago), University of Illinois at Chicago. Library. Special Collections and University Archives

## Streetscape Image Analysis Guide

Streetscape #1	What is going on in this image?	What do you see that makes you say that?	What questions do you still have?
<p><b>Location:</b> Carpenter &amp; 18th Street</p> <p><b>Date of original shot:</b> 1981</p> <p><a href="#">Present day Google Street View</a></p>			

**Additional thoughts on these two streetscapes:**

Streetscape #2	What is going on in this image?	What do you see that makes you say that?	What questions do you still have?
<p><b>Location:</b> Racine &amp; 18th Street</p> <p><b>Date of original shot:</b> 1981</p> <p><a href="#">Present day Google Street View</a></p>			

**Additional thoughts on these two streetscapes:**

## Streetscape Image Analysis Guide

Streetscape #3	What is going on in this image?	What do you see that makes you say that?	What questions do you still have?
<p><b>Location:</b> Komensky School (now Perez Elementary) at Allport and 19th Street</p> <p><b>Date of original shot:</b> c. 1955</p> <p><a href="#">Present day Google Street View:</a></p>			

**Additional thoughts on these two streetscapes:**

Streetscape #4	What is going on in this image?	What do you see that makes you say that?	What questions do you still have?
<p><b>Location:</b> Howell House (formerly Casa Aztlan, now rental residences) at Racine and 18th Street.</p> <p><b>Date of original shot:</b> c. 1950</p> <p><a href="#">Present day Google Street View</a></p>			

**Additional thoughts on these two streetscapes:**