

**FRENCH SECOND  
EMPIRE (1852-1870):  
HAUSSMANN AND THE  
BIRTH OF MODERN  
PARIS**



# **FRENCH SECOND EMPIRE (1852-1870): HAUSSMANN AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN PARIS**

## **Description**

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details, ideas and motivations the Haussmannization of Paris, how he used wide boulevards and ring streets to “modernize” the city and how the remaking of the city allowed governmental leaders to control any potential problems inherent in the antagonistic relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

## **Subjects**

European History  
World History  
Urban Planning

## **Grade Level**

11-12

## **Duration**

90 minutes

## **Tour Links**

- [Arc de Triomphe](#)
- [Place Charles de Gaulle](#)
- [Boulevard Haussmann](#)
- [Avenue Foch](#)

## Essential Questions

- Who was Baron Georges Eugene Haussmann?
- Who was Napoleon III? What was the “Second Empire”?
- What were the reasons behind the revolution that broke out in Paris in 1848?
- Why did the French army have a difficult time subduing the revolution in Paris during the “June Days” uprising?
- What were Haussmann’s ideas for remaking the urban areas of Paris?
- What evidence of Baron Haussmann’s “modernization” can be seen today in Paris?

## Academic Summary

In January 1870, after almost seventeen years as the leading urban planner on the European continent, Georges-Eugene Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine and Imperial Baron, was summarily relieved of his duties and left Paris in retirement. The expulsion of an old man from public office by members of a new government seldom stands as a focal point in world or western history. In Baron Haussmann's case, however, his dismissal signaled the end of an era during which nineteenth century liberal thought ruled France and foreshadowed the beginning of a new epoch when men and machines would ultimately intertwine to produce a Europe bent on militarism, mistrust and reactionary politics. Haussmann, however, was no politician, although his decisions helped formulate political thought in France over the course of the last half of the nineteenth century. He was no architect, but historians today refer to the architectural changes in Paris as "Haussmannization" and marvel at the simplicity and order achieved just by using a few wide streets. Haussmann was a city planner, and his plan for the remaking of Paris using broad boulevards served to suppress revolutionary problems in the city while at the same time giving the French nation a sense of self.

A major problem in Paris during the revolution of 1848 was the narrowness of its streets. An old city built on a medieval foundation, Paris possessed no real order nor urban plan. Neighborhoods over the centuries had simply morphed together in a growing mass of squalor and filth. As more and more workers filled the growing metropolis during the first half of the nineteenth century, these quarters became evermore crowded. When revolution broke out in 1848, the narrow streets throughout the city allowed workers to erect an almost impenetrable network of barricades. Only overwhelming firepower allowed the army to break through the rioting crowds and subdue the revolt. The new emperor, Napoleon III, needed a way to get the army into the city's neighborhoods quickly in case the workers decided to follow Marx's advice again and thus turned to Haussmann for a solution.

Haussmann decided to cut across the city in a series of boulevards, each one a testament to bourgeois culture and a monument to technology. The streets would serve a dual purpose. They would allow easy arterial access for the army while at the same time cutting the old troublesome hot spots into pieces. Haussmann's grand scheme was brilliant, yet almost childlike in its simplicity. The boulevards would dissect the French capital, while a series of ring streets would allow the city to be surrounded and enclosed in a tighter and tighter noose, if necessary. Along the streets, Haussmann directed the planting of trees and the erection of great stone facades, both designed to give Parisians a sense of modernity and serenity. The core of the old city was transformed from a crowded slum of 14,000 inhabitants to a new, clean governmental and public center. Much of the old neighborhoods remained largely intact, of course, as proletarian workers needed housing close to the industrial centers, but any unified sense of community was lost forever.

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details, ideas and motivations the Haussmannization of Paris, how he used wide boulevards and ring streets to "modernize" the city and how the remaking of the city allowed governmental leaders to control any potential problems inherent in the antagonistic relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

## Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the June Days revolution of 1848 in Paris.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain why the French army had such a difficult time suppressing the June Days revolution of 1848 in Paris.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann's model for urban planning changed Paris into the modern city it is today.
4. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Haussmann's theories behind urban planning served as a model for other cities around the world to follow.

## Procedures

### I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Modern cities today have large wide streets, normally laid out in a grid or radial pattern. What might be their purpose? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

### II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Haussmannization of Paris (20 min)
- Video – Haussmann's Reconstruction of Paris (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on the Haussmannization of Paris, taking notes as appropriate. (30 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.
- Group Activity – Discussion on the Haussmannization of Paris. (15 min)

### III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay: How did Haussmannization both hurt and help the citizens of Paris?

## Extension

### On tour: Arc de Triomphe

While on tour, you will visit the Arc de Triomphe, which Haussmann made as his new focal point in Paris. While there, students will have the opportunity to see for themselves how twelve boulevards radiate out from the Arc and cut across the Parisian neighborhoods. One can imagine how this helped French troops subdue the next revolution (1871), but unfortunately the boulevards also allowed German troops to march into Paris rather easily in 1940. Be careful. Traffic in this area can be crazy as cars try to navigate around the Place Charles de Gaulle (the square on which the Arc de Triomphe sits).

# Web Links

## Lesson Plan Websites

- [gallery.sjsu.edu/paris/architecture/Haussman.html](http://gallery.sjsu.edu/paris/architecture/Haussman.html)  
“Haussmann” on the San Jose State University gallery website
- [mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwartz/hist255-s01/mapping-paris/Haussmann.html](http://mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwartz/hist255-s01/mapping-paris/Haussmann.html)  
“Haussmann and New Paris” on Professor Robert M. Schwartz’s HIS 255 website “France in the Age of Les Miserables” at Mount Holyoke College (MA)
- [sixtensason.tumblr.com/post/55731450280/aerial-view-of-the-avenue-richard-lenoir-typical](http://sixtensason.tumblr.com/post/55731450280/aerial-view-of-the-avenue-richard-lenoir-typical)  
Drawing - Aerial view of the Avenue Richard Lenoir, typical of the boulevards cut by Haussmann through Paris. Note how the streets cut through the densely crowded slums.
- [archsoc.westphal.drexel.edu/New/ArcSocIIISA9.html](http://archsoc.westphal.drexel.edu/New/ArcSocIIISA9.html)  
Study Aid 9: 19th and Early 20th Century Urbanism (website) – from the Drexel University Department of Architecture and Interiors. The site contains many images of Haussmann’s plans and photographs of the work being done in Paris under his direction.
- [arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/architecture/Haussmanns-Architectural-Paris.html](http://arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/architecture/Haussmanns-Architectural-Paris.html)  
Haussmann’s Paris website – good overview of the Baron’s plan for remaking Paris
- [sites.google.com/site/beautyandterror/Home/bourgeoisie-and-proletariat](http://sites.google.com/site/beautyandterror/Home/bourgeoisie-and-proletariat)  
Beauty and Terror: Essays on the Power of Painting (website): “Bourgeoisie and Proletariat: an analysis of Gustave Caillebotte’s painting Paris Street; Rainy Day (1877). Essay by Brian A Oard, BA summa cum laude from Ohio State.
- [publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft296nb17v&chunk.id=d0e2641&toc.id=&brand=ucpress](http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft296nb17v&chunk.id=d0e2641&toc.id=&brand=ucpress)  
“Haussmann’s Paris and the Revolution of Representation” – Chapter 4 of Paris As Revolution: Writing the 19th Century City by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, Sociology professor at Columbia University. From the UC Press E-books Collection, 1982-2004 on the University of California Press website.
- [teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)  
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2 minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- [mit.uvt.rnu.tn/NR/rdonlyres/Urban-Studies-and-Planning/11-469Spring-2007/Assignments/schwartz.pdf](http://mit.uvt.rnu.tn/NR/rdonlyres/Urban-Studies-and-Planning/11-469Spring-2007/Assignments/schwartz.pdf)  
“Sociology of the (Parisian) Street” – essay on Haussmann’s reforms and how they changed the culture of Paris. By Jeffrey Schwartz, graduate student in MIT’s Spring 2007 Urban Sociology in Theory and Practice class (11.469) – Professor Diane Davis. On the MIT Open Courseware website.
- [vimeo.com/59970410](http://vimeo.com/59970410)  
“Haussmann’s Reconstruction of Paris” (video)

## **Background Information**

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haussmann's\\_renovation\\_of\\_Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haussmann's_renovation_of_Paris)  
“Haussmann’s renovation of Paris” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges-Eug%C3%A8ne\\_Haussmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges-Eug%C3%A8ne_Haussmann)  
“Georges-Eugene Haussmann” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June\\_Days\\_Uprising](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_Days_Uprising)  
“June Days Uprising” – Wikipedia article

## **Key Terms**

- Barron Haussmann
- Boulevard
- Bourgeoisie
- June Days
- Napoleon III
- Proletariat
- Revolution of 1848
- Urban Planning

