Pre- and Post-Visit Activities

The following activities are appropriate for K-5 and Middle and High School students, and include photographs of signs in the Neon Museum collection and links to video clips.

Pre-visit:

We suggest using the shorter video clips to introduce students to neon before your visit and then showing the entire Restoration Neon documentary as part of a post-visit wrap up.

Provide background on neon and how it’s made with photos and video clips.

Brief clips from the PBS documentary Restoration Neon:

- Noble gases: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crofaETM6LY&t=40m3s
- Tube bending: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crofaETM6LY&t=39m0s
- Chaser/scintillator: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crofaETM6LY&t=45m25s

Short video showing how neon is made:

http://youtu.be/HGUyH6zG7_U

K-3: Show photos of several different signs and have students describe them. Ask questions to get them to think about the range of different sign types (e.g. does a sign always need words on it?) Then have them complete a matching/identification sheet with images of different types of lighting and signs (neon, incandescent bulbs, LED, sculptural signs).

3-5: Using several of the images of signs from the Neon Museum collection (or others of present day Downtown or the Strip that you can find online), have students work in small groups to create a timeline based on what era each sign represents. Provide a time heading (e.g. 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, present day) and have the students place the signs on the timeline where they think they belong. Afterward, use the images to show how Las Vegas signs evolved from the simple designs of the 1930s, to “spectaculars” that towered above the Strip and covered entire buildings in the 1950s and 1960s, to modern day LED signs.

MS & HS: Divide students into small groups and have them research a different topic related to their visit (neon colors, tube bending, incandescent, LED), then give a brief presentation to the class. For example, one group should be able to describe the different colors available in neon lights and how they are created using noble gases and other elements, while another should be able to articulate what LED is and how it works, and so on.
Post-visit:

*Restoration Neon* PBS documentary; show in its entirety.

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crofaETM6LY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crofaETM6LY)

K-3: Have students draw examples of the different types of signs and lighting that they saw and learned about at the museum. This could take the form of a simple sheet with the name of a sign or lighting type and a clue with spaces to draw an example of it and to diagram some of its different parts.

3-5: Students create their own sign design using images from the prior timeline activity for inspiration. Students can sketch out their designs or make their sign using materials such as construction paper, cardboard, shirt boxes, pipe cleaners, and popsicle sticks, for example.

Ask students to re-design a Neon Boneyard sign based on one of the following questions:

- What would the Green Shack sign have looked like if it had opened in the 1960s instead of the 1930s?
- What might the Stardust or La Concha look like if they had opened in the 1930s?

MS & HS: Review how neon signs are made and use it to teach about the noble gases, the periodic table, atomic structure, and the characteristics of the noble gases. Then divide students back into small groups and have them answer one of the following questions for deeper study and share their answers with the class:

- What characteristics of the gases make them ideal for lighting applications?
- What is happening at the atomic level when the gases are electrified?
- How does neon lighting compare to incandescent, fluorescent, and LED lighting?
The Green Shack restaurant sign (c. 1930s) is an excellent example of the simple, less elaborate neon signage from the period.
The restored Silver Slipper (c. 1950s) is illuminated by incandescent bulbs and is one of the Neon Museum’s best examples of a sculptural sign, in which text is not the most prominent feature.

Wedding Information (c. 1940s) is another example of the modest and direct style of neon signs from the 30s and 40s.
The Golden Nugget “1905” sign (c. 1960) is one section of the blazing neon and incandescent sign that once wrapped the casino’s entire façade.

The Golden Nugget signage on Fremont Street, c. 1960s (Neon Museum Photo Collection).
Stardust sign letters (c. 1958) with star tower (c. 1968) in background.

Restored La Concha Motel pylon sign (c. 1961).
Original La Concha Motel and super pylon sign (photo from Spectacular: A History of Las Vegas Neon, p. 76; UNLV Special Collections). The shell shaped lobby of the La Concha Motel is now the Neon Museum’s Visitors’ Center.

View of the La Concha and Stardust signs on the Las Vegas Strip, c. 1980s. The Silver Slipper is also visible in the distance (Neon Museum Photo Collection).
Ugly Duckling Car Sales (c. 1990s) is a more recent neon sign.
The Neon Boneyard Park sign (2010) is an **LED** sign that incorporates letters and other design elements from several vintage Las Vegas signs. The “N” is taken from the Golden Nugget, the “E” from Caesars Palace, the “O” from Binion’s Horseshoe, and the “N” is from the Desert Inn. The diamond shaped stars are inspired by the Stardust, while the large red starburst and cursive blue “The” reference the Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas sign. The grid-like background is similar to that of the famous sign from the Sands Hotel and Casino.