

# City Hall



Almost twenty years since settling in Hong Kong, the British found that Hong Kong lacked a venue for social activities, entertainment, arts, and cultural events. The first City Hall was built in the 1860s by public contributions (located at where the current HSBC and old Bank of China buildings stand). It became a cultural centre for westerners and social elites. The majority of the population was largely excluded from this type of cultural activities.

As Central the financial centre developed, this old City Hall was demolished to make way for an HSBC building and a Bank of China building. Hong Kong did not have a City Hall again until the 1950s, when the need for cultural stimulation prompted a new city hall to be built.

Hong Kong's third reclamation project was carried out in the 1950s, once again extending the shoreline further north. The new City Hall was built here in 1962, and soon became Hong Kong's premiere arts and cultural centre. Where such cultural activities were enjoyed solely by the upper classes in the past, this new City Hall promoted arts and culture to the masses. The Hong Kong City Hall, with its theatres, exhibition halls, library, and museum, allowed the general public to participate not only in the appreciation of arts, but also in the creation of arts.

The City Hall remained to be Hong Kong's arts and cultural centre through the 1980s, until the Hong Kong Cultural Centre overtook its place. Yet the City Hall's place in the history of Hong Kong is unchallenged.

## Key Points

### City Hall

- **History (old and new city halls)**
- **Architecture**
- **Role in Hong Kong's arts and cultural development**
- **How the City Hall enhanced the quality of life of the people**



## Questions to be completed after Lesson 2

1. Why was the City Hall needed? Name three functions of the City Hall.

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2. How did the City Hall contribute to improving the quality of life in Hong Kong?

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3. Name one other civic centre, city hall, or performance venue in your neighbourhood. Functionally, how is it different from the Hong Kong City Hall? Looking at the nature of the programmes currently presented at your civic centre, city hall, or performance venue, and those at the Hong Kong City Hall, how are they different? Why is that the case?

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4. Do you think the "City Hall", as its name suggests, represents the city of Hong Kong? Explain your reasons.



Hong Kong City Hall, 1950s

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5. [For field trip] Can you identify architectural elements representative of the International Style?
