

MOVING WITH PURPOSE: VISITOR EXPERIENCE, EMOTIONAL RESPONSE, & FLOORPLAN DESIGN

GRADE: 6-12

TIME: Three 45-minute sessions

What role does a floorplan play in visitor experience? How does a floorplan relate to the overall purpose of a building? In this lesson, students will study the floorplan design of Unity Temple, Frank Lloyd Wright's groundbreaking 1905 design for a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Oak Park, Illinois. As they explore the floorplan, students will consider how the design may provoke an emotional response from the visitor and express unity. Then, students will compare and contrast Wright's Unity Temple floorplan design with floorplans of other public buildings, considering how each building is encountered and how each design relates to the respective building's purpose.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Social Studies, Visual Arts

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of Unity Temple (exterior, interior, and floorplan)

Images of other public buildings (optional: exterior, interior, and floorplan)

Paper

Pencils

1. Understand the relationship between form and function in architecture and design.
2. Draft a floorplan of a public building.
3. Compare and contrast various public building designs with Frank Lloyd Wright's design of Unity Temple.
4. Analyze how architecture and design can provoke an emotional response.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How are form and function related in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and other architects?
2. How do artists and designers create works of art that effectively communicate abstract ideas?
3. How do people engage with buildings?
4. How do buildings engage and shape communities?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Display an image of the exterior of Unity Temple, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright from 1905-1908.** Images can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>. **Without providing further context, have students consider:** What is the purpose of this building? What evidence of this purpose exists in the design?
- **Have students consider:** How does the exterior of Unity Temple make me feel? What about the design makes me feel that way? **Encourage students to compare and contrast the responses of their peers.**
- **Introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his design of Unity Temple.** Background information about Unity Temple can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/unity-temple/>. Share how the building was designed to be both a sacred space and a community space. **Have students consider to what degree the building is a successful sacred space and community space.**
 - **Differentiation:** Take a field trip to Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois.

ENGAGE

Session One

- **Ask students to imagine visiting Unity Temple and to consider how they would interact with the building.** Encourage students to mark their path into and through the building on a floorplan.
- **Challenge students to consider how each room in the floorplan would be used. To do so, have students virtually explore Unity Temple from various exterior perspectives and interior perspectives. As they do so, have students identify where each perspective could be found in a floorplan of Unity Temple. Have students consider:** How does my relationship to or perception of the building change from each perspective? How does the building's design shape my experience in and through the building? How does my experience in and through the building relate to the building's purpose, or the purpose of each room? **Encourage students to reference design elements and principles such as scale, unity, emphasis, and form.** More information can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/design-elements/elements-of-design/>.
- **After students further engage with the building, have them reassess how and why the building provokes an emotional response. Share that Wright was challenged to design a building that evokes unity, truth, beauty, freedom, and reason. Ask students:** How are these ideas expressed in the design?

EXPLORE

Session Two

- **Review Unity Temple and student observations from Session One.**

ENGAGE

Session Two

- **Have students draw a floorplan of a public building they know well, such as another house of worship, a school, a library, or a museum.** Project photographs as needed to support this endeavor.
- **Challenge students to observe and reflect upon the building's floorplan design. Have students consider how and why people enter and move through the building. Have students consider:** How does the building's design (or form) relate to its purpose (or function)? How does the design provoke an emotional response?
- **Encourage students to compare and contrast the design of their chosen public building with the design of Unity Temple, considering how the designs reflect different purposes.**

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

DESIGN

Session Two

- **Have students select a public building type to design, such as a post office, a concert hall, or a restaurant.**
- **Once a building type is selected, have students list an emotion or set of emotions that they hope visitors might feel when moving through the building. Have students consider:** How can the building be designed in order to provoke that response or set of responses? **Challenge students to design and draft a floorplan accordingly.** (Tip: Remind students to note how people enter and move through the building!)

Session Three

- **Allow time for students to complete and/or revise their floorplan designs.**
 - Optional Extension: Have students construct models of their designs.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Three

- **Have students share their designs, noting how the floorplan reflects the building's purpose.**
- **Have students reflect in writing upon the relationship between visitor experience and design, using Unity Temple, their own designs, and other public buildings as case studies.**