

DESIGN FOR TODAY: REMODELING THE ROOKERY LIGHT COURT

GRADE: 5-8

TIME: One 45-minute session

What does it mean to be modern? The Rookery Building, designed by Daniel Burnham and John Root in 1888, was considered the epitome of a modern office building for its time. However, changing trends and ideas in architecture led developer and Rookery Building manager Edward Waller to commission Frank Lloyd Wright to update the building's light court in 1905. In this lesson, students will learn about the modern updates made to the Rookery Light Court by Frank Lloyd Wright, and consider how Wright's remodel pushed architectural boundaries and honored the building's historical context. Then, students will propose new updates for the buildings that reflect today's trends. Lastly, students will share their new design proposals with their peers.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of the Rookery Light Court, both before and after Frank Lloyd Wright's 1905-1907 remodeling

Examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture

Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) video about the Rookery Light Court remodeling

Sketchbooks

Pencils

Colored pencils

1. Learn about the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.
2. Identify shapes and elements of nature that appear in the Rookery Light Court.
3. Design and propose new updates for the Rookery Light Court.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be modern?
2. What roles does context play in architecture?
3. Why do styles and trends change?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and the field of architecture. Emphasize Wright's use of simple, geometric shapes and interest in designing in harmony with nature.
- Introduce the Rookery Building, designed by Daniel Burnham and John Root in 1888. More information can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/rookery-building/>.
 - Differentiation: Take a tour of the Rookery Building!
- Have students explore historic images of the Rookery Building, considering: What made this building modern for its time? Images can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>.
- Explain how Frank Lloyd Wright was asked to remodel the Rookery Light Court in 1905. Ask students: Why do you think the building was remodeled?
- Show students the Chicago Architecture Center-produced video about the Rookery Light Court remodeling, found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1CcBmgih2g>.

ENGAGE

- Ask students to list geometric shapes that appear in the Rookery Light Court, both before Wright's remodeling and after Wright's remodeling.
- Ask students to list shapes in the Rookery Light Court that appear in nature. (Tip: You might have students look out their classroom window for ideas about shapes in nature!)
- Have students consider: Were Frank Lloyd Wright's updates successful? Why or why not? How do Wright's changes honor the original design? How do Wright's changes disrupt the original design?
- Ask students: What role does context play in design? Students can consider ways that today's buildings reflect surrounding landscapes or buildings as well as modern values, trends, or styles.

DESIGN

- Have students update the Rookery Light Court for today's world. Have students consider: What is considered modern today? How can any new changes made to the Rookery honor the existing design work of Wright, Burnham, and Root? Encourage students to draft ideas in their sketchbooks.
 - Optional Extension: Have students design a completely new lobby for a modern office building. How does the design differ from the historic Rookery structure and why?

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Have students share their ideas, noting how the changes reflect today's trends and honor the historical context of the building.