

DETAILS IN DESIGN: CREATING WITH CLAY

GRADE: 3-5

TIME: Four 60-minute sessions

As a building material, clay Roman bricks contributed to the design and structure of famous Frank Lloyd Wright buildings such as the Robie House and helped Wright design in harmony with nature. In this lesson, students will explore the medium of clay as they create a series of flat hand-built ceramic building facade designs inspired by nature.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Math, Social Studies

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Anchor text about Frank Lloyd Wright
Air dry clay
Tempera paint or watercolor paints
Paper
Pencils
Images of various Frank Lloyd Wright building facades
Architectural scavenger hunt
Note catcher worksheet (included below)
Planning worksheet (included below)

1. Explore the life of architect Frank Lloyd Wright.
2. Identify architectural details in building facades and their connections to nature (biomimicry).
3. Design a building facade inspired by nature and direct observation.
4. Create a building facade design using a variety of clay techniques.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How does nature influence design?
2. What are the architectural themes that appear in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, the buildings in and around my community, and in nature?
3. How can materials be creatively used in art and design?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Ask students to read an anchor text about Frank Lloyd Wright and record their comprehension by completing the “note catcher” activity included in this lesson plan.** (Tip: For an anchor text, we recommend *Who was Frank Lloyd Wright* by Ellen Labrecque, illustrated by Ted Hammond.) **Review text and discuss findings as a group. Emphasize Wright’s belief in designing in harmony with nature.**
- **Define “facade”** (a building’s exterior or “face”) **for students and ask students to draw the facade of their own homes. Ask:** What details are on the facade? What impact do they have on the design?
- **Working in small groups, have students explore various building facades designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Ask:** What similarities do you see between the facades? What details do you notice? Are any details similar to details in your own home? Do you think any details are inspired by nature? Why or why not? **Images can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>**

ENGAGE

Session Two

- **If time and space allow, students can practice identifying details in building facades by completing an architectural scavenger hunt.** (Tip: You can find one at <https://flwright.org/eyespy/>.) **During the walk, encourage students to sketch or take note of any details that are particularly inspiring as well as any details that draw attention to nature or natural surroundings. Ask:** Is clay used anywhere in building facades that you see? How is it used?

DESIGN

Session Three

- **Using the architecture planning worksheet included in this lesson plan, encourage students to generate multiple drafts and a final template for clay construction of an architectural facade that incorporates a variety of inspiring details from their scavenger hunt and references nature in some way.**
- **Distribute a small amount of clay to each student and encourage them to experiment with ways to manipulate it. Students can share findings. As an educator, demonstrate these three clay techniques: coil building, creating surface texture on cut slabs, and creating spheres.**

Session Four

- **Students will create an architectural facade that includes unique details inspired by nature and incorporates at least 3 clay techniques.**
- **Once done, students can experiment with using tempera paint, watercolor paint, or any other medium to add color to their facade.**

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Four

- **Create a gallery walk of student work in your classroom so students can showcase and share their work.**
- **Ask students to share a positive comment on a building facade design other than their own. If the walk is done independently, ask students to share positive comments on post-it notes.**
- **Ask students to write a short paragraph reflecting on this prompt:** Collectively, what are we doing well?



FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT
TRUST

NOTE CATCHER

What I *know* about Frank
Lloyd Wright...

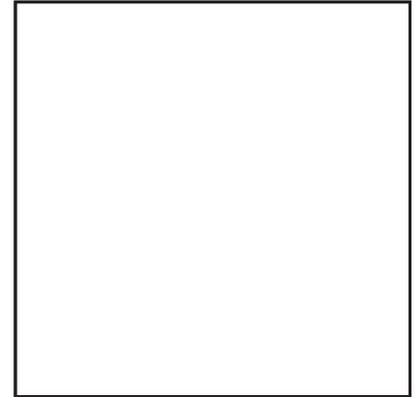
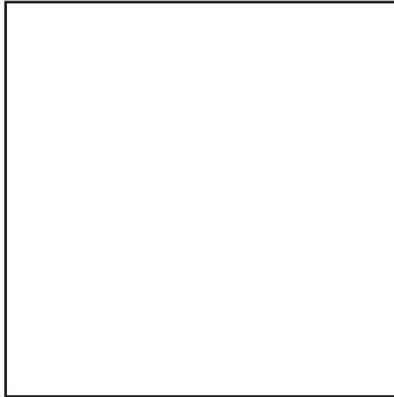
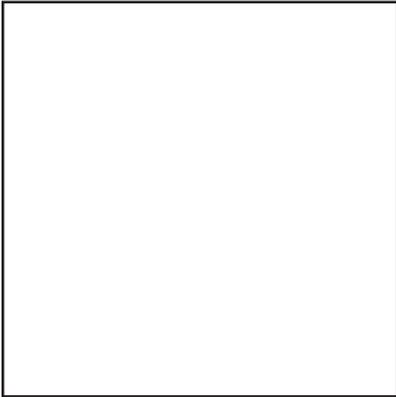
What I *learned* about Frank
Lloyd Wright...



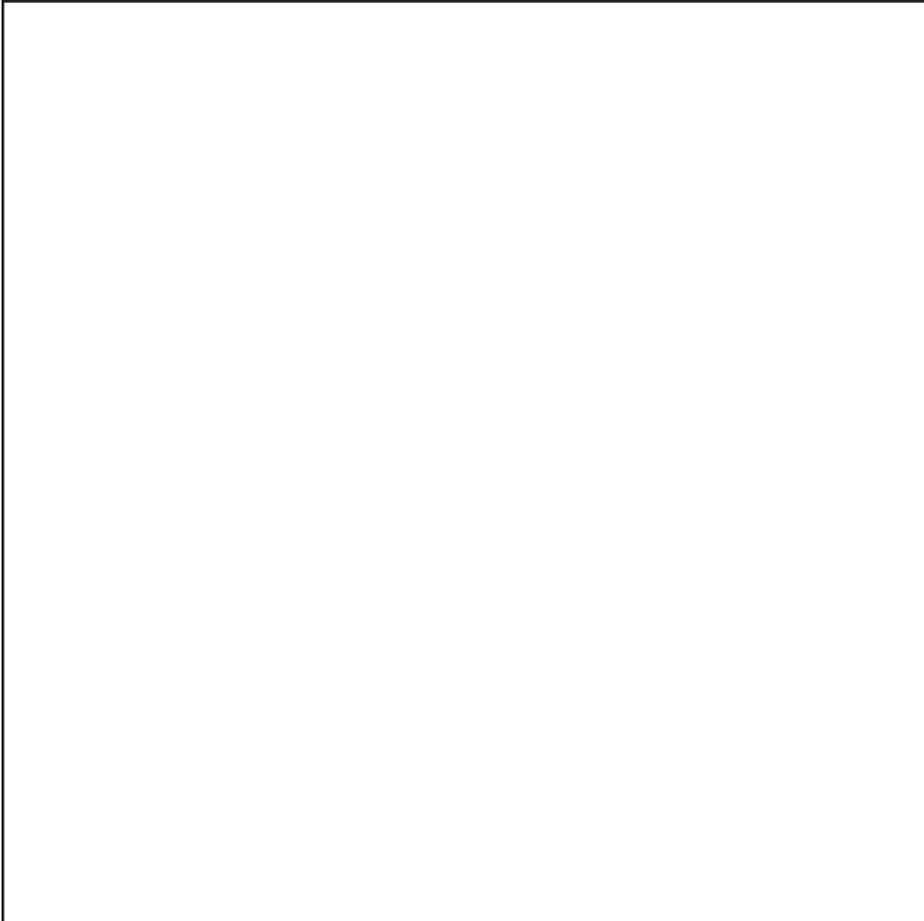
FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT
TRUST

PLAN YOUR DESIGN

Sketch a nature-inspired architectural facade in each small box.
Challenge yourself to incorporate inspiring architectural details you've seen!



Select one sketch to develop further. Draw in the large box.
How did the design change?



Describe how your design is inspired by nature.

