

DESIGNING KITCHENS

GRADE: 3-8

TIME: One 60-minute session

How have houses changed over time and why? In this lesson, students will explore how changing social attitudes and new technologies impact architecture as they hone in on the evolution of Frank Lloyd Wright's kitchen designs. Then, students will apply their understanding to the design of a new kitchen.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of kitchens in homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, including:

Oak Park Home & Studio
(1889-1909)

Frederick C. Robie House
(1908-10)

Fallingwater (1935)

Kentuck Knob (1953)

Paper

Pencils

Colored pencils

Construction paper (optional)

Glue (optional)

Graph paper (optional)

1. Compare and contrast architectural interiors.
2. Analyze how changing times, social attitudes, and technologies impact design.
3. Create an original work of art.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How and why have houses changed over time, particularly when it comes to kitchen designs?
2. How does architecture impact quality of life?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and the field of architecture.
- Share examples of kitchen spaces designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Examples can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>. With each image, ask students to write or draw everything they see, everything they think about what they see, and everything that their observations make them wonder. (Tip: This strategy is called “See, Think, Wonder” and more information about it can be found at <https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/See%20Think%20Wonder.pdf>)
- **Have students consider:** How are these kitchens the same? How are they different? **Encourage students to imagine how each kitchen would be used and how they might make one feel. Note that all of the designs incorporate natural materials in some way.**

ENGAGE

- Challenge students to organize the kitchens chronologically and discuss what clues exist in the images to help with this task, such as the use of older appliances.
- **Have students consider:** How and why did Frank Lloyd Wright’s kitchen designs evolve over time? **Encourage students to think about changing social factors such as the rise of feminism and manufacturing.**
- **Note the increased use of built-in furniture in Wright’s later designs, as well as the evolution of the kitchen from workspace to social space.** (Tip: Studying floorplans of each home can reinforce this concept! The Oak Park Home & Studio kitchen is in the very back of the building, away from the social spaces of the home. In contrast, the Kentuck Knob kitchen is located in the very center of the floorplan, acting as the “heart of the home”!)
 - Optional Extension: Compare and contrast Wright’s kitchen designs with other examples of influential twentieth-century kitchens, such as the Haus am Horn kitchen (1923) by Bauhaus designers George Mucho and Adolf Meyer, the Frankfurt Kitchen (1926) by Margarethe Schütte-Lihotzky, or the mass-produced, postwar kitchens of Levittown, developed by William Levitt in 1947. Or, compare and contrast Wright’s designs with older kitchen styles such as a traditional Shaker kitchen or a Colonial American kitchen. Encourage students to consider how each kitchen might be used and how each kitchen might make one feel.
- **Ask students to draw outlines of the kitchen spaces in their own households, adding labels as needed. Ask students:** What similarities and differences do you see between your own kitchen and the kitchens designed by Wright?
- **Have students consider:** How might Frank Lloyd Wright design a kitchen for families today?

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

DESIGN

- **Ask students to reflect upon how today's families live and work. Have students consider:** How has life changed since Frank Lloyd Wright was alive?
- **Challenge students to design a kitchen that will best serve today's families. Encourage students to sketch multiple possibilities, considering:**
 - Where would the kitchen be located in the home? What shape would the room be?
 - What materials and furniture would be used in the design?
 - What is innovative about the design? What am I designing that's new?
 - Is my design inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright? If so, how?
- **If time allows, have students use construction paper and glue to construct their design.**

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- **Have students display their sketches on a classroom gallery wall. View designs together as a classroom and discuss. Have students consider:** Did students have similar ideas? If so, why do you think that is? What was challenging about this exercise?
- **Encourage students to consider how other spaces in the home may have evolved over time.**