

# STORIES IN STONE

**GRADE:** 3-5

**TIME:** 60 minutes

Through Frank Lloyd Wright's Stork Columns at his Oak Park Home and Studio, participants will investigate symbolic imagery. By learning to read and decode symbols, participants will better understand how a building's structure and surface detail contribute to its story. Participants will further consider architectural examples from ancient and contemporary designs, before designing a building of their own that utilizes either structural or pictorial symbolism.

**INTEGRATED SUBJECTS:** Visual Art, Social Studies, Literacy

## OBJECTIVES

### MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of the Oak Park Home and Studio  
Stork Columns  
Studio Entrance

Images of buildings with symbols  
Religious buildings  
Buildings with Murals  
Ancient buildings

Drawing Paper  
Pencils  
Color Pencils  
Drawing Pens

1. Introduce a range of architectural styles.
2. Increase visual literacy, specifically the understanding of architectural symbolism and imagery.
3. Develop critical thinking and looking.
4. Challenge participants to consider the complexity and significance of design choices.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is a symbol?
2. How are symbols used in design?
3. How can you visually communicate a story or meaning?  
Can this change over time?

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## EXPLORE

5 minutes

- **Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and share images of his Oak Park Home and Studio.** Information is available at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/home-and-studio/>. Images are available at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>
- **Focus attention on the Studio entrance, providing detail images, and allow participants to examine its design.**

## ENGAGE

10 minutes

- **Discuss participant observations and encourage them to decode the symbols.** Have participants consider: What unique shapes or figures do you notice? Why would Frank Lloyd Wright include them in the design? What might Frank Lloyd Wright be communicating through the shapes and figures? Does their location add to their meaning?
- **Share Wright's intentions with the symbols found in the Stork Columns.**
  - Tree of Life = life, creativity, legacy
  - Stork = wisdom, creativity, ideas
  - Scroll & Floorplan = architecture, design, profession
  - Book of Knowledge = Expertise, ideas, wisdom
- **Have participants consider if Wright was successful in communicating his message.**
- **Ask participants to share other examples of symbols they are familiar with and where they can be found**  
Provide additional examples of buildings with surface art and discuss its meaning.

## DESIGN

40 minutes

- **Challenge participants to design a building that utilizes pictorial symbolism and/or architectural references.**  
**Encourage participants to consider:** Who will be using the building and "reading" your symbols? What do you want to communicate? What shapes and forms would be the most successful? Where will your symbols be located? Will the symbols and message you are communicating stay the same throughout time? Do your symbols work separately or together as a larger design?

## CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

5 minutes

- **Provide time for participants to interpret each other's designs.**
- **Have participants reflect on the challenges of communicating through symbols and imagery and on the ultimate success of their design.**