

SHAPE THE WORLD: CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND ADAPTIVE REUSE

GRADE: 9-12

TIME: Four 60-minute sessions

How can a vacant or underutilized building be reimagined as a community gathering space? How can a street, neighborhood, or city be positively transformed through art? In this lesson, students will explore the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Theaster Gates, and Amanda Williams to discover how buildings can be adapted, reused, and reimagined in order to foster community and build connections between people, place, and culture. Then, students will take the core principles of creative placemaking and adaptive reuse and apply them to their own proposal for a community-based space in their neighborhood.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies, Social-Emotional Learning

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Background knowledge of Frank Lloyd Wright, Theaster Gates, & Amanda Williams. (Resources can be found in the appendix below.)

Images of projects by Frank Lloyd Wright, Theaster Gates, & Amanda Williams. (Resources can be found in the appendix below.)

Paper

Pencils, markers, and/or colored pencils

Model making materials (optional) such as cardboard, paint, Model Magic modeling clay, glue, scissors, and tissue paper

1. Identify the role architects, urban planners, and artists have in shaping communities.
2. Explore the relationship between architecture and art.
3. Design and build a model for a community-based adaptive reuse project.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can art impact communities and the individuals who belong to a community?
2. How does art help us understand the lives of people in different times, places, and cultures?
3. How can art and design bring people together?
4. How can my culture be creatively reflected in a community gathering space?
5. How can a building be a work of art?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.** Explore how Wright shaped the world of architecture and impacted the lives of those who experienced his buildings. This can be illustrated with images of the Robie House or other culturally significant Wright homes that are now museums, such as Fallingwater or Taliesin.
- **Explore how Wright reimagined the American home by contrasting the building with other homes or house styles from the time period. Then, explore how the home has been reimagined as a museum. During discussion, have students consider:** Is this building a work of art? If so, how? What makes this building culturally significant? How do you think this building brought people together when it was first designed as a home? How do you think this building brings people together today?
- **Introduce the idea of creative placemaking, or the strategic strengthening of community through art, design, and culture. Have students consider:** Are museums like the Robie House creative placemaking sites? Why or why not? **Encourage students to explore how, or if, the Robie House engages the local community or connects local community members to other communities in any way. Consider physical, financial, and cultural accessibility to the site. Compare and contrast the building’s success as a creative placemaking site today versus when it was first designed as a home.**
- **Introduce contemporary Chicago artists Theaster Gates and Amanda Williams as creative placemakers.** (Tip: We recommend highlighting Theaster Gates’ Dorchester Projects and Stony Island Arts Bank as well as Amanda Williams’s *Color(ed) Theory* project. All three projects are highlighted in the artist TEDTalks found in the appendix below.) **Challenge students to assess the projects as community gathering spaces/creative placemaking sites or works of art. Have students consider:** In these projects, how are buildings reimagined? How do the artists creatively reflect the community’s culture or identity in their work? How do these projects unite people through art and design? **Note how existing buildings have been reimagined for a new use, a concept in design called “adaptive reuse.”**

ENGAGE

Sessions Two and Three

- **Ask students to each identify a building in their community that is underutilized, underinvested, or outdated.**
 - Differentiation: Split students into teams and have each team identify a building in their community that is underutilized, underinvested, or outdated.
 - Differentiation: Take a site visit to an underutilized building in the community.
- **Instruct students to brainstorm new uses for the building that could bring people in the community together. Have students consider:** How can I creatively reflect my community’s culture or identity? How would this new use shape the community in a positive way?

DESIGN

Sessions Two and Three

- **Once a new use is identified, ask students to sketch a few ideas for how they would design the space. Have students consider how the space is accessed and how to make the space more accessible.**
- **Challenge students to pick one design for further revision.**
- **As an optional extension, challenge students to construct small-scale models of their design with available classroom art supplies.**

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Four

- **When complete, encourage students to share designs with the rest of the classroom. Challenge students to argue why the proposed adaptive reuse would revitalize the community.**
- **With students, consider the entire collection of proposed projects for one community. Ask:** Do these projects meet different needs in the community? What changes could be made to these proposals to design a more vibrant, diverse community? How would these designs bring people together?



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APPENDIX A

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

www.teachingbydesign.org

www.flwright.org

THEASTER GATES

<https://www.theastergates.com/>

<https://rebuild-foundation.org/>

TEDTalk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9ry1M7JlyE>

Art21 "Chicago" segment about Theaster Gates: <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s8/theaster-gates-in-chicago-segment/>

AMANDA WILLIAMS

<https://awstudioart.com/home.html>

TEDTalk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMnKbol4fvY>

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

<https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/creativeplacemaking/>

<https://www.arts.gov/impact/creative-placemaking>

The Heidelberg Project in Detroit, MI (Tyree Guyton) <https://www.heidelberg.org/>

Project Row Houses in Houston, TX (Rick Lowe) <https://www.projectrowhouses.org/>