There are happy hybrid occasions when history and art combine. Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park Home and Studio, besides being a work of art, albeit of domestic modesty, was the first-act setting for a drama of the inventive imagination that changed the course of architecture. No literate person can stand in those rooms without seeing ghosts; without hearing the arguments, the laughter, the ideas about how to live and build and make art, that are now part of everybody's history.

Arthur Drexler
Former Director of Architecture and Design
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Wright compressed more and more values into the horizontal line and plane: sympathy with the prairie, repose, simplicity, intimacy of scale, breadth of vista, freedom, the easy accommodation of the flow and ebb of American life, quiet domesticity and streamlined modernity.

Donald Hoffman
Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House:
The Illustrated Story of an Architectural Masterpiece
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The Teacher Packet

Introduction

This packet is designed to help you exercise your students’ creativity and increase their awareness of the built environment. By introducing them to the work of architect Frank Lloyd Wright, you will encourage your students to develop observation skills, exercise their imaginations and explore the world around them. We hope you will apply the information and activities in this packet to your school’s neighborhood and, if possible, bring your classroom to the Robie House or the Home and Studio for a special visit.

The Organization

The Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust, formerly the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation, spent more than 13 years and $3.5 million to return the Home and Studio to its appearance in 1909, the last year Wright lived and worked at this site.

Plans for the restoration were made by looking at photographs taken by Wright and others. The restoration architects also interviewed Wright's children and others who had spent time in the building. They looked at original drawings for the building and examined the structure for clues. Today, the Home and Studio are furnished to represent the 1904-1909 period.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust was organized as a not-for-profit corporation in 1974 to acquire and preserve Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park residence and office. The organization is responsible for the preservation of the building and for its operation as a historic house museum and center for education on Wright and the Prairie School of architecture.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a not-for-profit corporation located in Washington, D.C., holds the title to the Home and Studio so that it will always be accessible to the public.

The U.S. Department of the Interior evaluates a building for designation as a National Historic Landmark using three primary criteria. The site must have national, not just state or local, significance due to one of the following: association with an event that was significant to our history; association with the life of a person significant to our past; or distinctive architectural characteristics. In 1976, the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio was one of the few prestigious buildings in the nation to qualify as a landmark under all three criteria.

The Preservation Trust is also currently overseeing restoration of the Robie House at 5757 S. Woodlawn, Chicago, on the campus of the University of Chicago. This fine example of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie style is also considered an icon of modern architecture. It is being restored to its 1910 appearance and is managed as an architectural house museum. The house is owned by the University of Chicago and managed by the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust. The restoration is estimated to cost over 8 million dollars.
Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect

America’s best-known architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, was born in 1867 in Richland Center, Wisconsin. His mother, a schoolteacher, surrounded his crib with drawings of cathedrals, determined her son would become a great architect. She gave him a set of wooden Froebel Blocks when he was nine years old—a gift he later said taught him lifelong lessons in geometry and design. As a boy, Wright enjoyed art, books and music, but the rural Wisconsin landscape inspired in him a deep love of nature.

After studying engineering, Wright set out in 1887 for Chicago. He worked first for architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee and then for the firm of Adler and Sullivan, designer of the Auditorium Theater, Chicago. His employer, Louis Sullivan, became a mentor to Wright and a friend who loaned him money to build his first house. Today, this Shingle style house in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park is open to the public as a museum.

Wright opened his own architectural office in 1893. This early part of his career, up until 1909, is often called his “first golden age,” because it was a period of intense creativity. During this time, Wright designed more than 125 buildings—a quarter of his life’s work—and invented a totally new form of architecture, the Prairie style.

The Prairie style of architecture reflects the midwestern terrain with earthen colors and flat, horizontal lines. After Wright made the style famous, many other architects adopted it, sprinkling the country with variations of the Prairie house. After leaving Oak Park in 1909, Wright designed many other revolutionary buildings. These include the Guggenheim Museum in New York and “Fallingwater,” a house built over a waterfall in Pennsylvania. Wright even designed a mile-high skyscraper that was never built.

The most influential figure in American architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright designed more than 1,100 projects, nearly half of which were built. He died in 1959. Few artists in any field have matched his energy, productivity or imagination.
The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio

The Home

In 1889, when Frank Lloyd Wright was 22, he bought a piece of land in Oak Park, Illinois. He borrowed $5,000 from his employer, Louis Sullivan, paid for the lot and built a house for his 18-year-old bride, Catherine Tobin. The property was at the corner of Forest and Chicago Avenues. A few houses were already standing on Forest Avenue to the south. To the north there was only Illinois prairie.

The design of the house was based on the Shingle style of architecture, popular in the Eastern part of the United States. The roof and walls were covered with cedar shingles. Wright liked the natural look that common brick and cedar shingles gave to the house. He used diamond-patterned, leaded glass to give texture to the windows.

Despite his youth, Wright had strong ideas about architecture. He placed the fireplace in the center of the plan, at the "heart" of the home. He used wide doorways so that each room would not be a little box. Wright wanted to connect the spaces of the house by reducing the size and number of walls.

Wright used his own house as a laboratory to experiment with new ideas. He designed skylights and indirect lighting. He used building materials in new and different ways. For example, the interior walls of the children's playroom are brick, not plaster.

The playroom and a new dining room were added to the original house in 1895. The addition was needed because the family was growing quickly. Six Wright children grew up in this house. The dining room was Wright's first chance to design a total environment. He designed the furniture and the lighting to complement the architecture of the room.

The Studio

Wright built a studio adjacent to his home in 1898. He wanted to bring his family life and work together under one roof. The architecture of the studio was very different from other buildings. It told possible clients that this was not the place to come if they wanted an ordinary house. The studio includes a reception hall, two-story drafting room, library, and office. The studio is joined to the home by a passageway, which was built to enclose a tree growing on the site.

Many important commissions were generated from the studio, including Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois, and the Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago. Several architects and draftsmen were employed at the studio; some became well known for their own work after they left Wright's studio. In 1909, Wright left Oak Park himself and later closed the studio. In 1911, he remodeled the studio as a dwelling for his wife and children. Wright moved to Spring Green, Wisconsin, and built another home and studio called Taliesin.
Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House

The Robies

Frederick C. Robie, born in 1876, was a Chicagoan of German heritage. He always wanted to become a “great manufacturer” and while still in college Robie went into the bicycle business. Eventually, he became quite successful. In 1902, he married Lora Hieronymous, and five years later the couple had their first child, Fred Jr. Their daughter, Lorraine, was born in December, 1909.

Fred Robie was a sensible yet adventurous businessman. In 1908, he decided to have a “sturdy, functional and strikingly modern” home constructed for his family in Hyde Park, an elegant neighborhood and home to the campus of the University of Chicago. Robie picked the site at the corner of 58th Street and Woodlawn Avenue, which overlooked the grassy picturesque Midway Plaisance.

Robie wanted a house with an abundance of light and great views of the surrounding neighborhood, yet one that also maintained his family’s privacy. He didn’t like small confining rooms and thought that flowing spaces were essential in a well designed home. He soon realized Frank Lloyd Wright was the architect who could provide these elements; they were all part of the Prairie style that Wright developed.

The Robie House

The Robie House site helped determine Wright’s plan. The corner lot is three times as long as it is wide. These dimensions caused Wright to think of the home in terms of long, narrow rectangles. In fact, the home consists primarily of two long and narrow “vessels,” each similar in shape to the hull of a ship, one set on top and slightly off-center of the other. When viewed from above, the two vessels are easy to see; however, from the street, each blends into the other, forming what looks like a single, continuous horizontal structure. The Robie House is constructed of red roman brick and was one of the first residences to incorporate steel beams into its design. These strong beams were necessary to create the cantilevered balconies, which appear to be suspended in mid-air.

The ground floor of the home was designed to take the wear and tear of everyday use, with a billiard room, playroom, and service areas. The first floor contains the home’s formal areas, including the living and dining rooms. These stretch in opposite directions from a central fireplace, a typical device in Wright-designed homes. The first floor also contains a kitchen and guest room. The second floor contains the private family spaces: three bedrooms surrounding a central hall. The first floor features a long balcony that stretches nearly the entire length of the home.
When clients like the Robies asked Frank Lloyd Wright to design a home, they received more than just a house. Wright typically also provided designs for furniture, lighting fixtures, wall hangings, rugs, and, in some cases, even dishes and clothing. Frank Lloyd Wright strove to create organic architecture and relied on such detailed instructions to create a complete environment. Though Wright himself never fully defined organic architecture, it is an approach to design that tries to unite—or relate—all the elements of a structure, such as its site, materials, ornament, and even the human users. Of course, achieving perfectly organic architecture was difficult even for Frank Lloyd Wright. As he once wrote, “The complete goal of the ideal of organic architecture is never reached. Nor need be. What worthwhile ideal is ever reached?”

The Prairie Style

The Robie House of 1910 is generally considered to be Wright’s “best” Prairie style work. This style is characterized by a dominating horizontal axis, banded windows, and a spacious and open interior plan. The exterior is dominated by a low hipped roof, simple building materials (mainly brick, wood, and stucco), and suggests a union of the site and the building.

Homes like these typically gave their owners great vistas from the many windows and balconies. Open spaces on the first and second floor of the homes’ interiors were intended to continue to the outside through these windows. The relationship between architecture and nature—one of the most important influences on Wright—is emphasized through the open and flowing design of the Prairie style.

Wright designed more than 125 buildings during his 20 years in Oak Park. When Wright left Oak Park in 1909, he was 43 years old. He went to Germany and worked on his “Wasmuth Portfolio”—a collection of his architectural drawings—which influenced European architects. A few years later he returned to the United States and continued to create other styles of buildings that greatly influenced modern architecture.
Influences on Frank Lloyd Wright’s Architecture

Frank Lloyd Wright’s unique style of architecture was inspired by many of his life’s experiences, interests, and passions. Though he rarely named these influences, there are four influences that are clearly visible in his architecture: nature, the Froebel Blocks, Japanese art and architecture, and Louis Sullivan.

**Nature**

Wright's family moved many times when he was a boy, but he spent most of his youth in southern Wisconsin. He loved the rolling hills of the countryside, where during the summer he worked on his uncles’ farms. There he learned the value of hard work and a love of nature. Flowers, plants, and other natural forms inspired many of his decorative designs.

**Froebel Gifts**

Frank Lloyd Wright's mother gave him the Froebel Gifts when he was nine years old. The Froebel system includes geometric-shaped maple blocks that the boy liked very much. He said that the blocks taught him not just to build, but also to design.

**Japanese Art and Architecture**

While working as an architect in downtown Chicago, Wright attended the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. This fair was a huge exposition of the latest technologies and showcased international cultures. Already curious about all things Japanese, Wright went to the fair and saw the Japanese Pavilion. He was very excited by what he saw. In 1905, he and Catherine made their first trip to Japan. Wright later became an important collector of Japanese woodblock prints. These prints are a centuries-old Japanese art form, usually depicting simple aspects of the everyday lives of middle- and upper-class Japanese. Wright said that the Japanese print influenced his architecture by teaching him to “eliminate the insignificant.” He also took specific architectural elements from Japanese design and incorporated them into his own work.

**Louis Sullivan**

In 1887, after studying engineering for a short time at the University of Wisconsin, Wright came to Chicago to work. About a year later, he joined the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan, which at the time was designing the Auditorium Theatre. Wright's talent earned him the job of chief draftsman. He was sometimes asked to design houses for the firm. Wright called Louis Sullivan "Lieber Meister," which is German for "Beloved Teacher." Sullivan even loaned Wright $5,000 to build his Oak Park house. Wright often said that he learned a great deal from Sullivan and a number of Sullivan’s characteristic architectural elements are clearly visible in Wright’s work.
**Music**
Wright's father taught him to love the music of Bach and Beethoven. Frank Lloyd Wright said that buildings were like music; just as the notes blend together to make a melody, the parts of a building fit together to make a whole. Wright played the piano and all of his children learned to play musical instruments.

**Classical Art & Sculpture**
Wright had a passion for the beauty and perfection of form in classical art and sculpture. Much of this classical art was from ancient Greece (especially the last two centuries BC) and the Italian Renaissance (early 1400s to 1600). He displayed reproductions of classical sculptures throughout his own homes, studios, and the homes he designed.
Books on Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture

Books for Children

**Houses and Homes**, Carol Bower. 1990. From the Usborne World Geography series, a guide to places where people live through the ages, around the world, and the uses of local building materials. 32 pp. packed with illustrations. ISBN 0-86020-191-0 paper.


**Architecture Counts** (same authors, information as Architecture Colors) ISBN 089133-213-8.

**Architecture Shapes** (same authors, information as Architecture Colors) ISBN 089133-211-1.


**Frank Lloyd Wright**, Wendy B. Murphy. 1990. A biography that explores how the events of Wright's life, both triumphs and disappointments, influenced his work. Includes useful chronology and glossary. For grades 7-10. 128 pp., 23 B&W photos and 8 color plates. ISBN 0-382-24033-2 hardcover.

Architects Make Zigzags, from National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1986. Drawings show the most common features of buildings and neighborhoods and give a glimpse of American architecture from coast to coast. ISBN 0-89133-121-2 paper.


Books for Teachers

** If you only purchase one book, this is it!


Box City, from CUBE. 1993. In this curriculum guide, build a city with modular boxes to teach city planning concepts and an understanding of neighborhoods and citizenship values. 113 pp. ISBN 0-9632933-1-2 spiral.


Many of these books are available through:

Ginkgo Tree Bookshop
951 Chicago Avenue, Oak Park, IL  60302
Phone:  708.848.1606
Hours:  10 am to 5 pm daily

Robie House Bookshop
5757 S. Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637
Phone:  773.834.1847
Hours:  10 am to 5 pm daily

Also at www.wrightcatalog.org.

Direct research questions:

Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Research Center
951 Chicago Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302
Phone:  708.848.1976
Hours:  1 to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday, closed during August
Glossary of Art and Architectural Terms

Abstraction A system in art and design where forms are represented by simplified shapes and patterns.

Arch A structure forming a curved, pointed, or flat edge to an open space; arches are often curved and support a wall above.

Architect A person whose work is to design and draw plans for a building.

Architecture The science, art or profession of designing and planning buildings.

Asymmetric Having unlike forms on either side of a central line.

Axis The direction of emphasis in a building (vertical or horizontal).

Bargeboard Decorative boards under the roof edge of a gable.

Barrel vault An arched ceiling that resembles the inside of a barrel.

Bas-relief Sculpture on the side of a building, that projects only slightly from the wall.

Bracket A triangle or "L"-shaped piece supporting a projecting roof or floor (bracket).

Cantilever A horizontal projection with no visible means of support. A diving board is a good example of a cantilever.

Capital The top or crowning feature of a column.

Clapboard Narrow overlapping horizontal boards used as siding (pronounced klab-erd).

Classical order A system of design, usually including columns, which is based on ancient Greek architecture. There are three major orders:

Doric There is no decoration on the capital, and the column is thick.

Ionic The capital has a scroll design, and the column is sometimes ribbed.

Corinthian The capital has a leaf design, and the column is thin and ribbed.

Clerestory window A window located in the upper part of a wall
Craft
1. A trade or work which takes special skill. Glass-making is a craft which takes years to master.

2. Objects made with artistic values in mind, such as ceramics, glass, metalwork, textiles, jewelry and more.

Cresting
A decorative wood or iron railing on a roof.

Cupola
A small, roofed structure placed on the main roof.

Decoration
Something added to a structure to make it more beautiful. Examples include brackets, dentils, and finials.

Dentil
One of a band of small, square, tooth-like blocks.

Elevation
A drawing showing the details of one side of a building; an elevation does not use or show perspective.

Facade
The exterior of a building, often the front side.

Finial
A thin, pointed piece of wood or metal on top of a roof used for decoration.

Floor plan
A drawing that illustrates in simple terms the size and arrangement of rooms in a building.

Form
The shape of an object.

Froebel blocks
Geometric blocks, a part of the Froebel Gift play materials developed by German educator Friedrich Froebel, for child development. Frank Lloyd Wright said they were a great influence in his life.

Geometric shapes
The shapes made from points, lines, angles and planes in geometry. Examples include circles, triangles, squares, spheres and cubes.

Hand-crafted
Made by hand rather than by machine.

Horizontal
Flat and straight across.

Inglenook
A small, room-like area around a fireplace, usually designed for sitting.

Keystone
The highest and central wedge-shaped piece in an arch.

Landmark
A place that has special cultural, aesthetic or historic value.

Leaded glass
Glass panels made of many small panes of glass separated by lead or zinc dividers (called cames); either colored or clear glass can be used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Logo</strong></th>
<th>An identifying symbol used in addition to or in place of words.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
<td>Anything of which an object is made. Building materials include wood, brick, steel, glass and concrete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural form</strong></td>
<td>A shape based on nature, which blends into its environment; not made by people; not artificial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural color</strong></td>
<td>A color found in nature, such as those in a landscape, often green or brown tones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oriel</strong></td>
<td>A bay window projected from a wall and supported underneath, often by a bracket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Porch</strong></td>
<td>A roofed structure with open walls connected to the exterior of a house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan</strong></td>
<td>See Floor Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prairie School</strong></td>
<td>The term describing the work originated by Frank Lloyd Wright and other architects around the beginning of the 20th century, which was designed to be a truly American form, free of European influences, and inspired by the environment. Characteristics include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>two crossing axes of the floor plan;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>low, horizontal design that reflects the midwestern prairie;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>geometric forms;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>windows grouped in a series—or band—known as light screens;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>limited exterior materials (wood, stone, brick, stucco), usually only one or two;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>integrated furniture;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>interior floor plan designed as one large room with small barriers creating adjacent spaces;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>wood banding or trim on walls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preservation</strong></td>
<td>Preventing further change or destruction to keep a building or object as it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Renovation</strong></td>
<td>Adapting a building to modern functions, leaving as many original elements as possible while adding new ones as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration</strong></td>
<td>Taking a building back to exactly the way it looked at a certain time. The Home and Studio has been restored to the period of 1909.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roof  The outer covering on the top of a building. Different types include:

**Gable**  Two sloping planes at the same angle (pitch) with a triangular end wall.

**Gambrel**  Barn-shaped, with two sloping planes which become steeper halfway down.

**Hipped**  Four sloping sides, all at the same pitch. This was the preferred roof of Prairie School architects.

**Mansard**  Steeply sloped sides with a flat or hipped top, named after 17th-century French architect Francois Mansard.

**Shed**  One sloping plane.

**Flat**  One horizontal plane.

**Dome**  A spherical form.

Sculpture  1). The art of carving, modeling or casting designs or figures.  
2). The pieces created through this art.

Shingle  A thin piece of wood or other material placed in overlapping rows on the roof or walls of a building.

Site  The place or location of a building.

Stained glass  *See Leaded Glass.*

Stucco  Rough-textured cement or plaster used to coat the outside of a building.

Suspension  The act of attaching something so that it hangs down.

Symmetrical  Having identical forms on either side of a centerline.

Terrace  An outdoor space next to a house, often used for lounging and eating.

Transom  A window located above a door.

Turret  A tower-like structure rising from the upper floors of a building.
Usonian  Frank Lloyd Wright's low-cost houses designed for the average American. The style was based on a grid system, and emphasized horizontal design, banded windows, and natural materials. The name derived from USA, as Wright felt that the word American applied to all the countries of North and South America, not just to the United States.

Vertical  Straight up and down; upright.

Victorian  A style of house popular in the mid-19th century. Main aspects of the style included a strong vertical direction; a steep roof; windows located randomly, providing one or two per room; and a center axis with box-like rooms. Often the houses were colorful, decorative, with great amounts of applied detail.

Window  An opening in a wall or roof that allows light, air and a view.
Types of windows include:

Bay  A group of windows that project out from the wall.
Casement  A window hinged on one side that opens like a door—the preferred window of the Prairie School.
Chicago  A large, stationary window with movable windows on either side.
Double-hung  A window with two sections that slide over each other vertically—the most-common form of window in houses.
Gothic  A window with a gracefully arched or pointed top;
Lunette  A fan-shaped (semi-circular) window, often found above a door;
Palladian  A window unit with a central arched window with rectangular windows on either side—named after the Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio;
Ribbon  a series of windows separated only by frames, which forms a horizontal band; Wright and other Prairie school architects often used such groupings.

Top Row: Bay, Casement, Chicago, Double-hung
Bottom Row: Lunette, Gothic, Palladian, Ribbon
Your Visit to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio

If you are planning a tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, the following instructional materials are included for your use:

- Basic Concepts of the Tour
- “A Letter from Llewellyn Wright”
- Tips for a Successful Tour
- Museum Etiquette
- After Your Visit: Questions
- After Your Visit: Activities

Here is some general tour information to help you plan your visit.

Group/Custom Tours
Guided tours for groups of 10 or more are available by reservation only. Arrange for school groups by making a reservation well in advance by calling 708.848.1978.

Regularly Scheduled Tours
Guided tours of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio are available Monday through Friday at 11 am, 1 pm, and 3 pm; Saturday and Sunday hourly from 11 am to 4 pm. Call 708.848.1976 for information about our Junior Architecture Tours or other educational programs.

Walking Tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District
Self-guided audiocassette tours in English, Spanish, French, Italian, German and Japanese are available daily from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. These tours do not allow access to any of the private homes; viewing is from the street only.

Special Accommodations
Accommodations for the disabled or visitors with special needs may be available upon request and with advance arrangements. Call 708.848.1976 or TTY 1.800.526.0844.

Hours of Operation
The Home and Studio is open daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. The Ginkgo Tree Bookshop is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm; this on-site shop features the country’s most complete selection of books on Wright, reproductions, maps and architecture-inspired gifts.
Basic Concepts of the Home and Studio Tour

The following concepts are some of the most commonly addressed by Tour Interpreters. The Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust trains its Interpreters not only to conduct tours but also to tell a story about what is seen—to relate the Home, Studio, and Frank Lloyd Wright to the experience and knowledge of visitors. There is no standard script, but visitors can expect to hear about any number of the following basic concepts.

Shapes
The dominant shapes on the front of Wright’s home illustrate the influence of Froebel blocks on Wright’s architecture. The broad triangle of the roof, the semi-circular lunette window, the rectangular bands of windows, the half-octagon bay windows, and the circular terraces are good examples.

Nature: Colors
The colors used in the home and studio are tan, green, gold, and brown. These are the colors found in the natural settings that inspired Wright early in his career.

Space: Ceiling Height
Wright varied the heights of the ceiling to visually expand spaces. The rooms on the second floor of the home extend into the area normally reserved for attics. In the studio, the drafting room height from floor to ceiling is 23 feet.

Space: Room within a Room
Wright created smaller spaces within larger spaces for an intimate feeling. The best examples are the living room inglenook and the enclosure formed in the dining room by the high-backed chairs.

Space: Innovation
Throughout the building, Wright designed creative uses for space. Wright sought to make rooms appear to have more or less space through carefully designed contrasts: dark and light, low and high, narrow and wide. One good example of these innovations is the tunnel-like hallway, with its low ceiling and dark colors, which leads to the barrel-vaulted, light-filled playroom.

Breaking the Box
A recurring theme of Wright’s architecture is breaking the box—altering the traditional cube-shaped rooms, square windows, and narrow doors. Wright used large openings without doors, bay windows, barrel-vaulted and lofty ceilings, and variously shaped rooms to create his unique interior spaces.

Japanese Art and Design
Wright collected Japanese woodblock prints and a number of them are displayed throughout the home. These prints often are representations of everyday life or landscapes, but usually lack detailed surroundings—the images appear to float on the canvas. Wright stated that what he learned from these prints was the “elimination of the insignificant.” Traditional Japanese architectural designs are also evident in Wright’s work. For example, the large, doorless openings between rooms that Wright frequently used hint at wide shoji screens.
Dear Young Visitors:

Hello, I understand that you are planning to visit my home, now called the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio. Let me introduce myself. I am Wright's youngest son, Llewellyn, and I was born in 1903 and spent my childhood in that house. I know Frank Lloyd Wright as a parent. You will learn more about him as America's most famous and creative architect.

The building you will visit is special because my father tried out so many of his new ideas there. It is special to me because it was my home. My father loved nature and this love came through in the way he designed. He chose colors from the earth and trees for his houses. When you visit, please notice the colors he chose for the shingles, bricks, roof, and rooms.

I have always felt that the windows in my house were magical. The long bands of diamond-shaped leaded windows seemed to bring the outside yard inside. Yet, you know, it was nearly impossible to sneak a peek into the house from the outside. This drove my neighborhood pals crazy! My chums were also jealous of the willow tree that grew right through our home. You'll get to see and hear more about that on your tour.

My father built many special places in this house. One of those places is in the parlor and is called the inglenook. In the inglenook, comfortable benches were built next to the fireplace. Since I was the youngest of the six children, I have fun memories of my older brothers and sisters bringing their dates to the "cozy corner" to hold hands and stuff. It was fun to sneak up and spy on them. How do you suppose that I was able to do that without them seeing me? Another trick I had was to set an alarm clock for 10 pm and hide it in a fireplace cabinet so that Catherine, my oldest sister, would remember what time to send her boyfriend home.

Father built an exciting playroom for us. It would become the center of day-to-day life for us with its three balconies at one end where we could hide, chase, or perform, and its fireplace and mural on the opposite wall. The mural was done of our favorite story, "The Fisherman and the Genie" from The Arabian Nights. At night, flames flickered over the face of the genie making him scarier than ever. Have you ever heard the tale? The ceiling is 20 feet tall and forms a perfect arch. This room became our very own concert hall. In those days before radio and television, we had to create a lot of our own entertainment. We all played musical instruments; I played the mandolin. My father placed our piano in a most unusual spot so it would not clutter the room. Wait till you see it! The bay windows are extremely low so that all of us could get a nice view of the outside. Our toys were stuffed under benches that were right under those windows. One day I happened to be standing on one of those seats when I stumbled right out the corner window! Luckily, my long shirt hooked onto the gutter, and I was hauled safely back into the room by my mother!

One goal of my father's was to have us grow up surrounded by beauty, light and space. You can experience these qualities yourself when you visit my home.

Yours very truly,

Llewellyn Wright

Written by Jan Dressel, based on: My Father Who Is On Earth, and oral histories of Wright's children.
Tips for a Successful Home and Studio Tour

Before You Arrive

In order for students to have an enjoyable, worthwhile visit to our museum, here are some ways to prepare for the tour.

- In your own neighborhood, use the Look at a Building observation questions. This activity introduces students to the main concepts of architecture.
- Discuss the Influences on Frank Lloyd Wright Designs. Perhaps, find your own supplemental resources to study each influence with your students. Also, assign students to identify specific elements during the Home and Studio tour that reveal these influences and discuss them after your visit.
- Review the words in the Glossary so that students are familiar with terminology that may be heard on the tour. Select the terms that are appropriate for your students. Charades and Jeopardy are fun ways to learn and test knowledge of this new vocabulary.
- Read “Letter from Llewelyn Wright” with your students; this letter provides insight to growing up in the Home and Studio from a child’s perspective.

Museum Etiquette

This house museum underwent extensive restoration to bring it to its 1909 appearance. Please help us preserve this historic house by following four simple rules:

- Do not touch or lean against any furniture, walls or items in the house.
- Food, drinks, gum, or smoking are not permitted in the museum.
- Stay with the group leader at all times.
- Indoor photography is not permitted.
After your Visit to the Home and Studio: Questions

Here are some questions to ask your students after their tour of the Home and Studio.

- Why is Frank Lloyd Wright famous?
- What features of the Home and Studio do you remember best?
- What would you ask Wright about himself or his buildings if he were alive today?
- How is the Home and Studio different from other homes?

After Your Visit: Activities

There are enormous possibilities for activities that either relate directly to the Home and Studio or that tie into your existing curriculum. Here are some of our ideas for you to try.

- Have students draw Wright’s logo as it appears on the stone plaque outside the studio entrance. Next, have the students design a logo for themselves.
- The playroom that Wright designed is approximately 16 by 22 feet. Have the children design their own playroom on an 8½ by 11 inch paper, using ½ inch=1 foot as the scale. Optional: have students put into words the process of “scaling” the room.
- Review the basic characteristics of the Prairie style of architecture. Ask students to design their own Prairie houses using broad eaves, low-hipped roofs, bands of casement windows, horizontal wood trim, and terraces or walls that extend the horizontal lines of the house.
- Many of Wright’s designs (especially his art glass patterns) are abstractions of nature. Have students study the forms of flowers and leaves. Have the students translate these forms into simple geometric shapes on paper.
- Have students create a house using geometric shapes (square, rectangle, triangle, circle, octagon). Optional: create models of the houses using blocks and other materials. Look how the placement of blocks in relation to one another weakens or strengthens the structure, creates height and width, etc.
- Study the history of your local community. What was happening in your area when Wright was designing Prairie style houses? Do you have any of Wright’s homes or similar styles in your area? When and how did your community develop? What clues to this history are seen in the local architecture? Is the community still growing? Why or why not?
- Have students design a building that Wright might design today if he were alive. Have students consider Prairie style elements, some of Wright’s later designs, and the trends of modern architecture. Would Wright have changed with the times? Would he have fought against modern trends? A little bit of both?
Your Visit to Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House

If you are planning a tour of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House, the following instructional materials are included for your use:

- Basic Concepts of the Tour
- “A Letter from Fred ‘Sunny’ Robie, Jr.”
- Tips for a Successful Tour
- Museum Etiquette
- After Your Visit: Questions
- After Your Visit: Activities

Here is some general tour information to help you plan your visit.

**Group/Custom Tours**
Guided tours for groups of 10 or more are available by reservation only. Arrange for school groups by making a reservation well in advance by calling 773.834.1361 or 708.848.1978.

**Regularly Scheduled Tours**
Guided tours of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House are available Monday through Friday at 11 am, 1 pm, and 3 pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 3:30 pm. Tours are available on a first-come-first-serve basis.

**Special Accommodations**
Accommodations for the disabled or visitors with special needs may be available upon request and with advance arrangements. Call 773.834.1361.

**Hours of Operation**
The Robie House is open daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. The Robie House Bookshop is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm; this on-site shop features a large selection of books on Wright, reproductions, maps and architecture-inspired gifts.
Basic Concepts of the Robie House Tour

The following concepts are some of the most commonly addressed by Tour Interpreters. The Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust trains its Interpreters not only to conduct tours but also to tell a story about what is seen—to relate the Robie House and Frank Lloyd Wright to the experience and knowledge of visitors. There is no standard script, but visitors can expect to hear about any number of the following basic concepts.

Shapes
The dominant shapes throughout the Robie House illustrate the influence of Froebel blocks on Wright’s architecture. The narrow rectangular Roman brick, the jutting triangles of the prow windows, and the spherical globe lights are good examples.

Nature: Colors
The colors used in the Robie House are tan, pinkish-tan, ocher and brown. These autumn colors were found in the natural settings that inspired Wright early in his career.

Interior and Exterior Space
Wright designed the Robie House to break down the divisions between interior and exterior space. He brought the outside in through the use of the long expanse of art glass French doors on the south façade, which in 1910 gave a clear vista of the Midway Plaisance. He also used balconies and porches, accessible through the art glass doors, to blend interior and exterior space.

Space: Room within a Room
Wright created smaller spaces within larger spaces for an intimate feeling. The best examples are the living room inglenook, the small dining space within the prow, and the enclosure formed in the dining room by the high-backed chairs.

Space: Innovation
Throughout the building, Wright designed creative uses for space. Wright sought to make rooms appear to have more or less space through carefully designed contrasts: dark and light, narrow and wide. One good example of these innovations is the narrow stairway, originally enclosed by grillwork, which leads to the light-filled expanse of the living and dining rooms.

Breaking the Box
A recurring theme of Wright’s architecture is breaking the box—altering the traditional cube-shaped rooms, square windows, and narrow doors. Wright used large openings without doors, prow-shaped windows, ceiling grills and recessed lighting, and variously shaped rooms to create his unique interior spaces.

Japanese Art and Design
Wright collected Japanese woodblock prints, which often are representations of everyday life or landscapes. He stated that what he learned from these prints was the “elimination of the insignificant.” Traditional Japanese architectural designs are also evident in Wright’s work. For example, the large, doorless openings between rooms that Wright frequently used hint at wide shoji screens.
Dear Young Visitors:

Hello! I understand that you are planning to visit the Robie House, which was my home when I was three years old. My father, Frederick Robie, hired the architect Frank Lloyd Wright to design our house. Mr. Wright wasn’t too famous then, but he is very famous now, and our house is one of his greatest accomplishments. While it was being built, I used to play in the big piles of sand that the builders used to make mortar and concrete. I also had fun walking on the boards the workmen used as bridges for their wheelbarrows and carts. They seemed very high and dangerous to me, even though they were only a foot off the ground.

The Robie House is special because in it Frank Lloyd Wright tried out many ideas that became known as the Prairie style. For example, there is a lot of open, flowing space in the house, so our family spent a lot of time together. Notice how few of the rooms can be closed off with doors.

My father asked Mr. Wright to create a special place for my sister and me to play. We had our own playroom on the ground floor with a door that opened onto a play area outside. We could ride our tricycles right out the playroom door and into the courtyard! My father also asked for a high wall to be built around our courtyard so we could play safely. My mother could keep an eye on us from the balcony above the courtyard without having to come downstairs. In our playroom, notice how the fireplace is child-sized.

We loved the beautiful art glass windows in our house. Mr. Wright loved nature, and he wanted us to be able to see the sky and the trees. When the house was built, there were no buildings across the street. We could see all the way to the Midway Plaisance two blocks away! In the winter, we watched people ice skate there.

I hope you enjoy your visit to this house that Frank Lloyd Wright built for my family. You can experience for yourself the beauty, light, and space that surrounded us in Mr. Wright’s design.

Sincerely,

Fred “Sunny” Robie, Jr.
Tips for a Successful Robie House Tour

Before You Arrive

In order for students to have an enjoyable, worthwhile visit to our museum, here are some ways to prepare for the tour.

- In your own neighborhood, use the Look at a Building observation questions. This activity introduces students to the main concepts of architecture.
- Discuss the Influences on Frank Lloyd Wright Designs. Perhaps, find your own supplemental resources to study each influence with your students. Also, assign students to identify specific elements during the Robie House tour that reveal these influences and discuss them after your visit.
- Review the words in the Glossary so that students are familiar with terminology that may be heard on the tour. Select the terms that are appropriate for your students. Charades and Jeopardy are fun ways to learn and test knowledge of this new vocabulary.
- Read “Letter from Fred ‘Sunny’ Robie, Jr.” with your students; this letter provides insight into living in a Frank Lloyd Wright home from a child’s perspective.

Museum Etiquette

This house is undergoing extensive restoration to bring it to its 1910 appearance. Many elements of the house are in extremely fragile condition. Please help us by following four simple rules:

- Do not touch or lean against any furniture, walls, windows or items in the house.
- Food, drinks, gum, or smoking are not permitted in the museum.
- Stay with the group leader at all times.
- Indoor photography is not permitted.
After your Visit to the Robie House: Questions

Here are some questions to ask your students after their tour of the Robie House.

- Why is Frank Lloyd Wright famous?
- What features of Robie House do you remember best?
- What would you ask Wright about himself or his buildings if he were alive today?
- How is Robie House different from other homes?

After Your Visit: Activities

There are enormous possibilities for activities that either relate directly to Robie House or that tie into your existing curriculum. Here are some of our ideas for you to try.

- The playroom that Wright designed is approximately 37 by 20 feet. Have the children design their own playroom on an 8 ½ by 11 inch paper, using ½ inch=1foot as the scale. Optional: have students put into words the process of “scaling” the room.
- Review the basic characteristics of the Prairie style of architecture. Ask students to design their own Prairie houses using broad eaves, low-hipped roofs, bands of casement windows, horizontal wood trim, and terraces or walls that extend the horizontal lines of the house.
- Many of Wright’s designs (especially his art glass patterns) are abstractions of nature. Have students study the forms of flowers and leaves. Have the students translate these forms into simple geometric shapes on paper.
- Have students create a house using geometric shapes (square, rectangle, triangle, circle, octagon). Optional: create models of the houses using blocks and other materials. See how the placement of blocks in relation to one another weakens or strengthens the structure, creates height and width, etc.
- Study the history of your local community. What was happening in your area when Wright was designing Prairie style houses? Do you have any of Wright’s homes or similar styles in your area? When and how did your community develop? What clues to this history are seen in the local architecture? Is the community still growing? Why or why not?
- Have students design a building that Wright might design today if he were alive. Have students consider Prairie style elements, some of Wright’s later designs, and the trends of modern architecture. Would Wright have changed with the times? Would he have fought against modern trends? A little bit of both?
Please share interesting student writings or projects! We will display them at our offices.

Mail to: Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust
       Education Department
       931 Chicago Ave.
       Oak Park, IL 60302

Citation Style:

If your students use information from this packet in a written report, the following format can be used for citing their source:

Photo Credits

p. 5  Frank Lloyd Wright at desk, date unknown: Research Center, Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

p. 6  Wright Home, Oak Park, Illinois: Don Kalec for the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

p. 7  Robie House, exterior: Hedrich Blessing for the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

p. 8  Robie House, interior, 1992: Judith Bromley for the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

p. 9  Landscape: source and photographer unknown.

p. 9  Froebel Blocks: Distribution Center, Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust

p. 9  Japanese woodblock print: Mt. Fuji Off Kanagawa, Hokusai Katsushika.

p. 9  Japanese pavilion: Chicago Historical Society


p. 10  Winged Victory: Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

p. 21  Llewellyn Wright at age 6, 1909: Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

p. 26  Frederick C. Robie, Jr. at Robie House construction, c. 1909: Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust.

2003 revision and Robie House tour materials prepared by Jan Kieckhefer, Director of Education.
A Contrast in Style

Prairie and Victorian Architecture

Wright’s Prairie Style

At the turn of the last century, many of today’s everyday features were strange curiosities. The country was becoming urbanized, industrialized, motorized, and electrified. Frank Lloyd Wright, designing in his studio in Oak Park, Illinois, was making revolutionary changes in American architecture.

He rebelled against the elaborate exuberance of the Victorian style, with its historic ties to Europe. He set about to create a new, truly American style. He designed buildings that reflected their Midwestern landscape and called them Prairie style houses. They were homes that used humble materials in a natural way — homes with strong horizontal lines; bands of art glass windows; wide, protective eaves; and welcoming, centrally-located fireplaces.

By opening up narrow doorways, space literally flowed from room to room without interruption. Wright’s open floor plan broke the “boxes” of the Victorian style. His interiors featured innovative built-in furniture and indirect lighting, and he designed carpets, lamps and other decorative elements that enhanced his architectural designs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prairie</th>
<th>Victorian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900-1925</td>
<td>1880-1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal emphasis</td>
<td>Vertical emphasis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration with site</td>
<td>No relationship to site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banded windows</td>
<td>Random windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-pitched, often hipped roofs</td>
<td>Tall, steep-pitched roofs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low, broad chimney</td>
<td>Tall narrow chimney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obscure entrance for privacy</td>
<td>Direct, formal entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple materials used naturally, honestly</td>
<td>Fanciful, ornate materials and decorations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open plan—spacious interior</td>
<td>“Box” rooms form the interior spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basement and attics</td>
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**Prairie Style House**

- Chimney
- Hip Roof
- Overhang
- Banded Windows
- Porch
- Watertable

**Victorian Style House**

- Chimney
- Gable Roof
- Overhang
- Windows
- Porch
- (Basement)

**HORIZONTAL EMPHASIS**

**VERTICAL EMPHASIS**
**Now You Try It!**

See how well you can pick out the differences between the Prairie and Victorian styles by filling in the chart below. First, identify the style of the house shown and fill in the blank next to the drawing. Then, summarize one or two characteristics for each design element: site, materials, roof, windows and doors, and ornament. Don’t worry about using the “right” words; use your own to describe the buildings *as you see* them!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Roof</th>
<th>Windows &amp; Doors</th>
<th>Ornament</th>
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How to Look At a Building

We all know more about architecture than we think we do. We have learned about the interiors and exteriors of houses just by living in them. These questions will help you focus on architectural concepts in an easy, relaxed way. They are not meant to teach about building styles, but to get students involved in active observation of the built environment.

Take the questions and your students outside in front of a building (your school building is a good place to start) and start the discovery process. You may incorporate a few terms from the Glossary of Architectural Terms if you wish, but the primary goal here is to observe and discover. Have fun!

Outside the Building

Site – location or place of something
  - Why is the building placed as it is?
    - Central on a large lot?
    - Tightly fit on a smaller lot?
    - Directly on the lot line?
  - Does the building blend in with the surrounding buildings?
  - What kind of plant life is around it?

Massing – shape of building
  - Is the building a basic geometric shape or more freeform?
  - Is it symmetrical or asymmetrical?
  - How many shapes can you find on the building?
  - Look at the silhouette (line where the roof meets the sky)
    - Is it simple (one major roofline) or complex (many rooflines and projections)?

Construction materials
  - What is the building made of?
  - How many different construction materials can you find?
  - Is the texture basically smooth or rough?
  - Does the building have one basic color or many colors?

Open and closed areas
  - Are there open areas like porches, decks, carports?
  - Are there closed spaces like garages or greenhouses? Are they attached to the main building?
  - Where do you enter? Why do you think the entrance is placed where it is?
    - Is it prominent?
    - Does it have decorative elements around it?
    - Is it central or asymmetrical?
    - Is it inviting or private?
  - Are there sidewalks, paths, driveways leading to the entrance?
Ornamentation
- How is the building decorated? Is it simple or ornate?
- Does it have trim? Wood or stone carvings? Sculptures? Planters? Tiles?
- Can you find any patterns in the decorations?
- Is this building colorful?

Function
- Can you tell from the outside what the building is used for?
- Does the building look cozy? Awe-inspiring? Free? Confined?
- Do you think this building is being used for its original purpose?

Now move inside the building.

Purpose
- What is this room used for?
- What do people do here?
- Why is this room needed?
- Are there any built-in storage areas?

Materials
- What kinds of materials were used on the floor? On the ceiling? On the walls?
- Are there decorations?
- How is the room heated? Cooled?

Transitional spaces
- How do you move from room to room in the building?
- Is there a hallway or stairway?
- Do you need to go through one room to reach another?
  - If so, what is the advantage? Disadvantage?
- Is it accessible to people with special needs?
- Is there enough space around furniture and equipment?

Light
- How does light enter the room?
- Is the light artificial or natural?
- Are there windows? How are they placed?
- Are the color schemes bright or dark?

Sound
- What do you hear in this room?
- Are noises coming from the outside? If so, what are they?
- Are there noises inside the room? What are they?
- Can you hear each other when talking?
- What absorbs the sounds?

Impression
- What makes this room special? How do you feel in this space?