



FRANK  
LLOYD  
WRIGHT  
TRUST

# BREAKING THE BOX: PRAIRIE STYLE POP UP REPORTS

**GRADE:** 3-8

**TIME:** Open research project

Completed in 1910, Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style masterpiece, the Frederick C. Robie House, "broke the box" of traditional architecture of the time. Wright used new materials and technologies to change the form of the house and how people lived in and used their homes. In this activity, participants research Wright's novelties and represent examples of Prairie Style innovations through their own four-room pop-up diorama.

**INTEGRATED SUBJECTS:** Visual Art, Science, Literacy

## OBJECTIVES

### MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Examples of Wright's work (Frederick C. Robie House)

Images of other architects designs

Paper (square, 4 sheets per participant)

Pencils

Colored Pencils

Glue

Tape

Scissors

1. Explore Frank Lloyd Wright's unique vision for American architecture which included new and innovative designs and technologies.
2. Think critically about how technologies function to affect design.
3. Communicate ideas and design concepts visually and verbally.
4. Question and critique the built environment.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to "break the box"?
2. How does new technologies make way for changes in the way we design?
3. How does understanding historic changes in design impact the way we design today?

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## EXPLORE

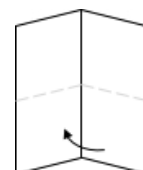
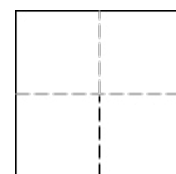
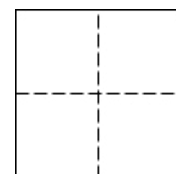
- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright as an American architect and designer focusing on the Prairie style (<https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/prairie-style/>) and the Frederick C. Robie House (<https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/robie-house/>).
- Together, spend time looking at the Robie House in comparison to its contemporaries and define and discuss major similarities and differences. Images can be found at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>. **Consider:** What shapes make up these houses? How are the shapes used differently in each? What materials have been chosen to construct the house? What colors were used and how does this fit with the environment? How do you think it would feel to live and move through each one?

## ENGAGE

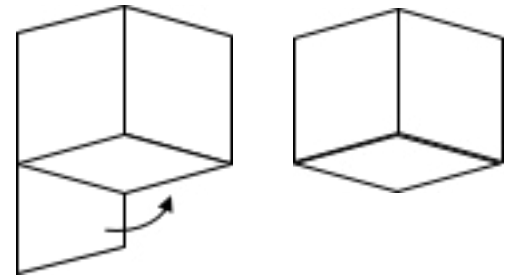
- Define and discuss the word **innovation** and introduce some examples of how Frank Lloyd Wright changed domestic architecture.
  - Open living spaces and floor plan
  - Creating smaller areas of use within large rooms
  - Importance of purpose, place, and time in the design
  - Use and function of built-ins
  - Integration of nature
  - Innovative methods and technologies
- Provide time for participants to further research the Prairie style more deeply. Online or in the library, have participants research and record the ways that Frank Lloyd Wright's designs stood apart from other architecture of the early 1900s. Contemporaries include Charles Rennie Mackintosh, C. F. A. Voysey, Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, and Koloman Moser.
- Have participants select what they believe are the four most important innovations that they discovered during their research. In a four-room pop-up diorama, ask students to describe and illustrate each innovation. Have them support each decision with a 3-5 sentence explanation and draw or build an example in each "room." Allow students time to alter the pop-up to imitate Wright's Prairie style designs.

## DESIGN

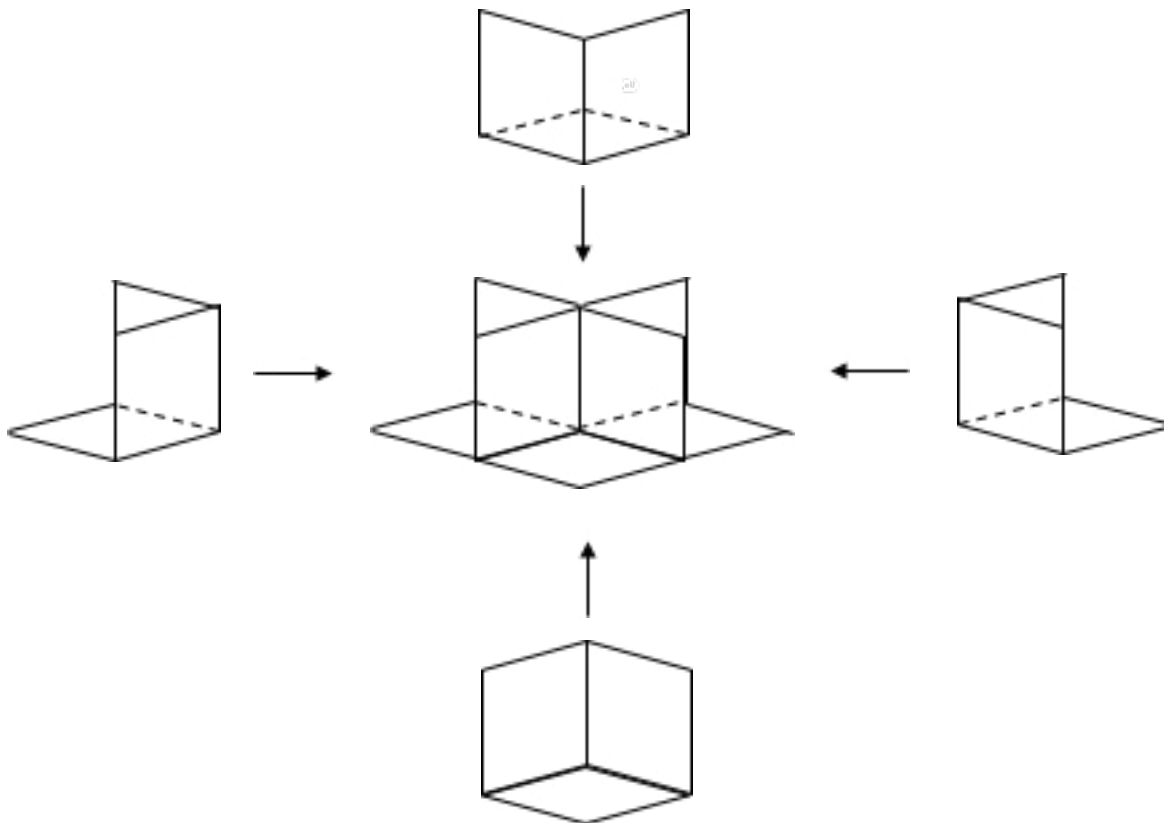
- To create a four-room pop-up diorama:
  2. Fold the first square sheet of paper in half twice so that it is divided into quarters. Open it back up to see the fold marks. They will make a plus sign on the paper.
  3. Cut half way along one center fold mark to the other center fold to create a slit in the paper.
  4. Fold the paper in half to make a 90 degree angle.



5. Fold the two squares of paper on either side of the slit up to overlap one another, and glue the pieces together to create three sides of a box.



6. Repeat steps 1 – 4 with all four squares of paper to create four partial boxes.  
7. Glue the sides of each box together to create four “rooms.”



- Inside each room (box), ask participants to describe and illustrate each innovation. Encourage participants to alter their pop-up to imitate aspects of Wright’s Prairie style designs.

### **CRITIQUE & INTERPRET**

- Have participants share their research discoveries through an oral presentation of their pop-up book. Encourage participants to describe and support the innovations they chose and share how they illustrated them.
- After oral presentations, compare the innovations that were chosen and discuss which innovations were the most popular and why.