

A CHAIR FOR MY...

GRADE: 2-3

TIME: Two 60-minute sessions

Core to Wright's philosophy of organic design were his furniture designs, which reflected the design of the buildings they inhabited as well as the evolving needs of their users. Wright would often design furniture for his own family and circle of acquaintances, carefully considering form, function, and user during the design process. In this lesson, students will engage in that same process as they explore chairs designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and then design a chair for a loved one.

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

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Paper

Pencils

Examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's furniture designs

Examples of a wide variety of chair designs

Image of the Robie House dining room

Model building materials such as cardboard, tape, and glue

A Chair for My Mother by Vera Williams (optional)

1. Explore how utilitarian furniture can be interpreted by architects and designers in an artistic way.
2. Design a piece of furniture that improves the daily life of a loved one.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What roles do reflection and observation play in the design process?
2. What inspires me, and how can I use what inspires me to create a unique work of art?
3. Who in my world inspires me and how can I design a better world for them through the design of a chair?
4. How does the way I react to a work of art reflect what I value?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Introduce students to Frank Lloyd Wright and the job of an architect.** Emphasize Wright's furniture designs as an important component of his architecture. Background information can be found at <https://flwright.org/researchandexplore/furnitureanddecorativearts>.
- **Share images of a variety of examples of Wright's furniture.** Ask students to consider: Who might sit in the chairs and why?
- **Share a photograph of the dining room in Wright's Robie House.** Ask students to identify the furniture they see. Have students consider: How do you think it would feel to sit at this table in this chair in this room? Why? What shapes are used in these furniture designs? Can you see these shapes elsewhere in the room?
- **Discuss how the tall backs of the Robie House dining room chairs help to enclose the space and create a more intimate environment for sharing a meal.** Contrast this intimacy with the wide open floor plan of the Robie House dining room and living room. Images to support this discussion can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>.

ENGAGE

Session One

- **Explore a wide variety of chair designs with students.** These designs do not have to be designed by Wright and can be from many different cultures and time periods. Examples can be found at <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/chair-design>.
 - Differentiation: Students can independently search for a wide variety of chair designs.
- **Challenge students to pick three contrasting chair designs to reflect upon.** Instruct students to sketch these chairs and take note of any inspiring details that might impact how the chairs are used. Have students consider: Who might sit in these chairs and why? How do you think these chairs would make them feel? Encourage students to use evidence to support their conclusions.
- **Ask students to choose a person for whom they will design a chair or a piece of furniture and encourage them to write a short paragraph reflecting upon that person's daily experience.** Have them consider: What does my loved one do during the day? What colors, shapes, or patterns do they like? What type of chair would they enjoy using during the day and why?
- **Reflection exercise can be enriched through classroom reading of *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera Williams.**

DESIGN

Session Two

- **Instruct students to sketch a few ideas for chair designs that will be appropriate for their loved one, using their guided written reflection and exploration of chair designs as starting points.** Have students consider: What shapes, colors, and materials will be used? What makes my design appropriate for the loved one I am designing for? How do I want my loved one to feel when sitting in this chair?
- **Ask students to select one chair design for further revision and have students make any necessary edits to their sketch.**
- **Encourage students to use cardboard, Model Magic modeling clay, and/or whatever materials are available to build a model of their chair design.**
- **If time permits, ask students to design a room for their chair design as an extension activity.** Have students consider: Are there any shapes or colors from my chair design that will appear in the overall design of the room?

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Two

- Instruct students to complete a self-reflection on the process of designing a chair with a specific person in mind, and the process of creating that design.
- Display student designs in a “gallery walk,” transforming the classroom into a physical or virtual gallery space.
- With students, view completed designs and help students critique and support the designs of their peers. One easy way to do this is to utilize the “TAG” mnemonic:
 - **T**ell the artist something you like about the design.
 - **A**sk the artist a question about the work.
 - **G**ive a suggestion for the artist.