

# FRAMING STORIES

**GRADE:** 4-12

**TIME:** Two 60-minute sessions

Explore Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of "pathway of discovery" through study of the architect's influential 1905 trip to Japan and subsequent building designs! Using photography as a creative storytelling medium, students will illustrate their own "pathway of discovery" by photographing a familiar route from a variety of perspectives.

**INTEGRATED SUBJECTS:** Visual Arts, Social Studies, Language Arts

## OBJECTIVES

### MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Viewfinders

Frank Lloyd Wright's photographs of Japan  
(Photographs can be found at <https://www.wrightsjapan1905.org/photographs/>.)

Examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's  
architecture

Paper

Pencils

Cameras (optional)

See/Think/Wonder table (included below)

1. Learn how Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings were informed by Japanese architecture.
2. Understand Frank Lloyd Wright's "pathway of discovery" technique and how it is applied in his photographs and building designs.
3. Illustrate Frank Lloyd Wright's "pathway of discovery" concept through photographic storytelling.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can composition impact interpretation?
2. How are photographs similar to stories?
3. How can photography be a tool for storytelling?

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## ENGAGE

Session One

- **As a class, let students explore one photograph of Japan taken by Frank Lloyd Wright during his first trip to Japan in 1905.**
- **Using the See/Think/Wonder resource included below, challenge students to write down everything they see, everything they think, and everything they wonder about the photograph. Students can share observations with a partner.**
- **Discuss student observations as a group. The following are some sample questions to facilitate discussion:**
  - What story does the photograph tell? How?
  - Focus on how your eye moves across the image over time. Does the photograph have a beginning, middle, or end?
  - Where is the focal point or emphasis in this image? (Compare this to the climax of a story.)
  - How does the focal point impact how you interpret or understand the photograph?
  - Are there details that you didn't notice at first?
  - What do you think is outside the frame of the photograph?
  - What questions do you have after looking at this photograph?
- **Without context, let students explore a set of printed photographs of Japan taken by Frank Lloyd Wright during his first trip to Japan in 1905.**
- **Repeat the See/Think/Wonder process with the set of photographs. Students can share observations with their partners.**
- **Discuss the set of photographs as a class. The following are some sample questions to facilitate discussion:**
  - When were these photographs taken and where?
  - Why do you think they were taken?
  - Were they all taken by the same person?
  - What do you think interested the photographer?
  - **As students make guesses, challenge them to provide evidence by asking:** What do you see that makes you say that?

## EXPLORE

Session One

- **Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and the job of an architect. Reveal that photographs were taken during Wright's first trip to Japan, which had a significant influence on his work as an architect.**
  - Support with examples of Wright-designed buildings that are heavily influenced by Japanese architecture, such as the Hills-DeCaro House, Unity Temple, and the Peter Beachy House in Oak Park, IL. Images can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>.
- **Challenge students to compare and contrast Wright's designs with buildings and landscapes captured in his photographs of Japan. Encourage students to pay close attention to how buildings are approached and entered.**
- **During discussion, introduce students to Wright's "pathway of discovery" technique, or the intentional placement of building entrances in inconspicuous locations in order to force visitors to explore and take in all visual details as they discover how to access the building. Ask:** How might this technique impact the way you experience a building? How might this technique make you feel?

# LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

## DESIGN

### Session One

- **Through narrative journaling, have students reflect upon their journey to their classroom from the school's entrance and consider how it makes them feel. Have students consider:** Is there a pathway of discovery? What inspires or interests me along the route?
  - Differentiation: Alternative routes/buildings can be chosen as long as the route is accessible during Session 2 of the lesson, or if the Session 2 content is assigned as homework.

## EXPLORE

### Session Two

- **Review Frank Lloyd Wright and the "pathway of discovery" technique.**
- **Using Wright's photographs as examples, explore how the composition or framing of each photograph influences the way the image is interpreted. When reviewing a set of Wright's photographs, have students consider:** Is there a pathway of discovery? How? (Tip: The "pathway of discovery" in this exercise does not exclusively apply to buildings photographed in the images but also to the framing techniques employed by Wright in each photograph.) How does the composition or perspective of each image produce discovery over time? What details are revealed over time?

## ENGAGE

### Session Two

- **In groups, challenge students to sequence Wright's photos in chronological order. As they do so, encourage students to look for buildings that are photographed multiple times from different perspectives. Ask:** What new details do you notice? How might it feel to approach the building that you are observing? What makes you say that? How did the way Wright composed or framed the image contribute to that feeling?
- **With viewfinders, have students practice composition and framing techniques. Encourage them to frame the same scene from a low vantage point and from a high vantage point. Ask:** How does the view change? How do different perspectives impact the way that view makes you feel?

## DESIGN

### Session Two

- **Using viewfinders to practice composition, instruct students to follow their route to the classroom and take note of any details they discover along the way.**
- **Using written narratives as inspiration, ask students to sketch or photograph images of their route that illustrate the feelings they have along the route. Encourage students to use compositional techniques to express those feelings.**

## CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

### Session Two

- **Ask students to use their images or sketches to share their unique experience of walking to the classroom. When sharing, challenge students to communicate how they used composition and perspective to best illustrate the experience. Have students consider:** Is there a climax? How was that conveyed in the work? How were feelings expressed through photography?



FRANK  
LLOYD  
WRIGHT  
TRUST

# SEE/THINK/ WONDER

I see...	I think...	I wonder...