

MIXING THE COLORS OF FALLINGWATER

GRADE: 6-12

TIME: Three 50-minute sessions

Frank Lloyd Wright famously unified structure and site in the design of Fallingwater, his iconic 1935 Pennsylvania summer home built above a waterfall. In this lesson, students will take a closer look at the design of Fallingwater and its colors, considering how colors in nature can inspire the color palette of a building design. Then, students will practice mixing paint colors to closely match the palette of Fallingwater.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Science

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Liquid tempera or acrylic paint colors (red, yellow, blue, black, and white)

Small paint brushes

Palette knives (optional)

Palettes or paper plates

Cups of water

Paper towels

Newspaper

Color templates (included below)

Paint shirts, smocks, or plastic aprons

Images of and/or videos about
Fallingwater

Fallingwater color chart (example linked
below)

1. Mix paint colors to closely match each color in a Fallingwater-inspired palette.
2. Experiment with and make hypotheses about color mixing.
3. Understand how the eye detects and perceives color.
4. Understand the concept of primary colors and how primary colors relate to color theory.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Why do our eyes see different objects as different colors?
2. How can a new color be created by mixing paint together?
3. What are primary colors and what role do primary colors play in art and design?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and the job of an architect. Emphasize how Frank Lloyd Wright designed in harmony with nature, an approach called organic design.
- With images and/or videos, introduce Fallingwater, Wright's iconic 1935 design for Edgar J. Kaufmann. (Resources include <https://fallingwater.org/> and <https://fallingwater.org/fallingwater-from-home/>) Ask students: How is Fallingwater an example of organic design? What role does color play in design?
- Provide students with a chart of colors used at or inspired by Fallingwater. (An example can be found at: <https://www.ppgpaints.com/color/color-collections/fallingwater/the-colors-of-fallingwater>) Ask students: How does this combination of colors make you feel? What does it remind you of? What about it surprises you?
- Discuss the process by which our eyes detect color. (Tip: The following video has a helpful explanation: <https://www.amnh.org/explore/ology/brain/seeing-color>)
- Introduce the concept of color mixing. Demonstrate how to set up a palette for color mixing. For paint, participants will need a small number of primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) as well as small amounts of black and white.
 - Optional Extension: Give students an opportunity to try mixing their own colors "virtually" through this site: <https://trycolors.com/>
- Demonstrate set-up and clean-up procedures. This includes washing brushes, covering the work surface with newspaper, and reviewing strategies for use of classroom sink or bucket for clean-up.

EXPLORE

Session Two

- Review Frank Lloyd Wright's use of colors, the concept of color mixing, and set-up and clean-up procedures.
- Allow a minimum of 10 minutes to clean-up.

ENGAGE

Session Two (and Session Three if necessary)

- Have participants set up palettes for color mixing.
- Ask participants to hypothesize about what will happen when two different colors on the palette are mixed together.
- Instruct participants to experiment with mixing colors. (Tip: Students may need blank paper for experimentation.) As they mix colors, encourage participants to share with their peers any findings or insights from the process.
- Ask participants to consider how they can lighten and/or darken their colors.

DESIGN

Session Two (and Session Three if necessary)

- Provide students with a chart of colors used at or inspired by Fallingwater. (An example can be found at: <https://www.ppgpaints.com/color/color-collections/fallingwater/the-colors-of-fallingwater>)
- Challenge students to match colors to the Fallingwater color chart, aiming to get as close to the sample colors as possible. Encourage discussion, collaboration, and experimentation.
- When students are satisfied with their results, have them paint their final colors onto the color chart template (provided below).
- Encourage discussion, collaboration, and experimentation.

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Two (and Session Three if necessary)

- **Stress that the color template is a working document, a place for experimentation. Ask students:** What was the process of color matching like? What challenges did you come across and how did you overcome them?
- **Have students share their results and discuss what colors were most difficult to match and which colors were easiest to match.**
- **Have students consider:** What color in this palette would you use to paint various parts of a home, apartment, or school? Why? (Tip: Be aware of any unhoused students!)
- **Review images of Fallingwater and ask participants to reflect on how colors were used in different parts of the home and why Frank Lloyd Wright used these particular colors.**



FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT
TRUST

COLOR TEMPLATE

