

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND JAPANESE PRINTMAKING

GRADE: 4-8

TIME: Three 50-minute sessions

Following a 1905 trip to Japan, Frank Lloyd Wright developed a keen interest in Japanese art and architecture. This is especially evident in Wright's large collection of Japanese prints, which he twice organized into exhibitions for the Art Institute of Chicago. In this lesson, students will analyze how Wright's architecture was influenced by his love of Japanese prints. Students will compare and contrast artworks, then apply what they have learned to design a print inspired by Wright and the Japanese art.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies, Math

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Printfoam sheets or repurposed styrofoam

Corrugated cardboard or greaseproof
paper

Ballpoint pens

Printmaking ink

Brayer

Printmaking baren (optional)

Palette knife

Inking tray or plexiglass

Block printing paper

Masking tape

Pencils

Images of Wright's Japanese-influenced
architecture, such as Unity Temple,
the Peter Beachy House, and the
Hills-DeCaro House

Examples of Edo period Japanese art and
design (may include Japanese interi-
ors, ukiyo-e woodblock prints by Hoku-
sai and Hiroshige, and Japanese textile
and kimono patterns)

Internet access or printed materials for inde-
pendent student research

1. Compare and contrast visual elements in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese artworks and interiors.
2. Reflect upon how Japanese art and design influenced the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.
3. Create relief prints utilizing geometric and organic motifs inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese art and architecture.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can I reinterpret works of art to create a new work of art?
2. What is the relationship between art and architecture?
3. How did Frank Lloyd Wright bring nature into his designs?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- Introduce students to Frank Lloyd Wright and organic design. Focus conversation on Wright's interest in nature and geometry.
- Introduce students to Japanese art, architecture and design from the Edo period. Have students consider: Are there any similarities between the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese art and design? Use images of Wright's Japanese-inspired building designs to support the discussion.
- Share that Wright was a collector and admirer of Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Define relief printmaking and demonstrate the process of making a woodblock print. (Tip: A great video explanation can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfqsTy3Yx24>)
- Explain that students will engage in the process of relief printmaking by creating prints inspired by Wright and Japanese art.

ENGAGE

- Give students the opportunity to use books and/or online resources about Wright and Japanese art to re-search their own images of interest. When exploring materials, have students consider: What inspires me and why?
- Instruct students to write a short reflection of what stood out to them about the images they chose. Have students reflect on design elements like color, texture, form, and proportion. Then have students discuss their findings in small groups.
- Challenge students to produce a few quick sketches inspired by their images and/or what they have learned about Wright and Japanese art. Circulate the room to provide feedback and support.

EXPLORE

Session Two

- Review the relationship between Frank Lloyd Wright's work and Japanese art and architecture.
- Review the art of relief printmaking. (Tip: A quick overview can be found at <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/family-how-to-relief-printing>)

ENGAGE

- Demonstrate how to make a printing plate with a pencil and printfoam. Remind students that any mark made with a pencil onto the plate will not be inked, and the final print will be the mirror image of the image on the printing plate.

DESIGN

- Ask students to create a printing plate inspired by their preliminary sketches and ideas that inspired them. If extra materials are available, have students create a few different printing plates before picking one to use for their prints.
- Demonstrate how to produce a print from the printing plate. Give students time to create a set of prints using their foam printing plates. Encourage students to experiment with ink colors, and papers. Allow ample time for clean-up.

LESSON PROCEDURE

DESIGN

- Optional Extension: Repeat the printmaking process as you challenge students to design and print a frame for their work. **Have students consider:** How can I design a frame that complements my prints?

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Give students time to reflect in writing on their creative process and productivity.
- Facilitate a gallery walk activity to give students the opportunity to reflect and discuss the artworks made by their peers. Challenge students to identify the Japanese influences on images and shapes.