

SIGNATURE DESIGN: CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTS

GRADE: 6-12

TIME: Two 50-minute sessions

From the stork columns at the Oak Park Home and Studio to the iconic red square, Frank Lloyd Wright was continually leaving his signature on the designs and buildings he created. Often, these symbols were more than simple bylines; they were meant to communicate what he wanted others to know about his work and designs. In this lesson, students will analyze Frank Lloyd Wright's professional logo before designing a logo for a favorite or newly discovered contemporary architect. This lesson can serve as an extension to the Teaching by Design lesson entitled Signature Design.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies, Language Arts

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

[https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/
rtf-fresh-perspectives/a461-architec
ture-of-superhero-films/](https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/rtf-fresh-perspectives/a461-architecture-of-superhero-films/)

Examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's
architectural designs and logos

Drawing paper or sketchbooks

5" x 7" paper or blank index cards

Pencils

Colored pencils or markers

Internet access for independent student
research and logo search

1. Understand how a professional logo, graphic signature, or symbol can be a communication tool.
2. Research a contemporary architect and identify any conceptual themes or visual elements that unite their body of work.
3. Develop a logo or graphic signature for a favorite or newly discovered contemporary architect.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is a symbol and what is its purpose?
2. What makes a successful symbol?
3. How do architects and designers visually communicate their ideas?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and explore his architectural designs, which may include Fallingwater, the Frederick C. Robie House, the Guggenheim Museum, and Taliesin. Ask students what makes these structures unique, functional, and innovative. Have students consider:** What do the designs have in common? Focus on design elements such as line, color, texture, and shape.
- **Introduce the concept of a symbol, graphic signature, or logo. Ask:** What is a symbol and what is its purpose? What symbols do you encounter on a regular basis? What makes a symbol successful or unsuccessful? How might architects use symbols?
 - Optional: Include graphic aids of modern logos from well-known companies, found via internet search or student participation.
- **Display examples of Frank Lloyd Wright's many logos, which can be found at <https://franklloydwright.org/building-a-brand-the-enduring-legacy-of-frank-lloyd-wright/>. Have students consider:** How might Wright's logos relate to his architectural designs? Why might Wright have revised his logo so often in his career? Would these logos be successful today? Why or why not?

ENGAGE

Session One

- **Challenge students to consider what a contemporary architectural logo or graphic signature might look like. Have students select a contemporary architect to research independently. Examples include Jeanne Gang, Zaha Hadid, David Adjaye, Shigeru Ban, Frank Gehry, Richard Rogers, Elizabeth Diller, Toshiko Mori, and Frida Escobedo.**
- **When researching a contemporary architect, have students focus on any conceptual themes or visual elements that link the architect's work. Encourage students to sketch any repeating elements that they see so that they may incorporate them into their later logo creation.**
- **For a reflection activity, ask:** What do these architects have in common? What is different about each of their designs? How do you plan to highlight their personal style or vision in your own work?

EXPLORE

Session Two

- **Review how architects can use logos or personal symbols to communicate their style and/or design philosophy.**
- **Ask students to share what they have discovered through research about their chosen contemporary architect. have students consider:** What might their logo look like?
- **Demonstrate drawing a sketch or thumbnail of several logo ideas for a favorite architect. Model a working-process of experimentation and revision when sketching.**

ENGAGE

Session Two

- **Challenge students to develop several ideas for a new graphic signature or professional logo, asking classmates for feedback at various stages of the design process.**
- **Have students pick an idea to develop further. When students are satisfied with their design, have them draw their idea lightly with pencil on a 5" x 7" piece of drawing paper or blank index card.**
- **Once students are satisfied with the pencil sketch, encourage them to add color to their design using colored pencils or markers.**

LESSON PROCEDURE (Continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Two

- **Ask students to give a description or show an example of a building by the architect they chose. Then, have students present their logo design, noting what the design would communicate to the public. Have students consider:** How does my design relate to the architect's work?
- **Have students display their finished logos in a visible place in the school.**
- **Optional Extension:** Have students design a personal logo or graphic signature. Have students consider: What does it communicate? How does it express my personality?