



FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT
TRUST

ABSTRACT NATURE: MATCHING GAME

GRADE: 3-8

TIME: One 1-hour session

Frank Lloyd Wright's designs often depict objects from nature in abstract, geometric forms. After analyzing images of abstract art, students will move around the classroom to match Wright's abstract art with the object in nature it represents. Students will work with a partner to analyze images for similarities and differences. Finally, students will create thumbnail sketches to show the transition between abstraction and reality. This lesson pairs well with [Animal Abstraction: Frank Lloyd Wright, De Stijl and Geometry](#).

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Physical Education, Science

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of abstract art (Appendix A)
Images of Wright's designs (Appendix B)
Images of nature (Appendix C)
Answer Key (Appendix D)
Challenge Questions (Appendix E)
Thumbnail Worksheet (Appendix F)
Pencils
Post-it notes
Tape

1. Understand the difference between realistic art and abstract art.
2. Match Frank Lloyd Wright's works of art and architecture to the objects in nature they represent.
3. Represent nature forms through kinesthetic movement.
4. Create a sketch to show the progression between realistic and abstract art.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can abstract art represent a realistic object?
2. What objects in nature influenced Wright's designs?
3. How do artists use shapes and colors to blur the lines between reality and abstraction?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

- Discuss the term “abstract”. Share Appendix A with students. Examine the transition between Theo van Doesburg’s *Studies for Composition (The Cow)* sketches with his abstract piece *Composition VIII*. Pose the following questions to students:
 - What elements does van Doesburg eliminate as he simplifies his sketches? Which elements does van Doesburg maintain throughout his sketches? How does *Composition VIII* relate to van Doesburg’s initial sketch? What features does van Doesburg think are most important in capturing the essence of a cow?
- Next, share Piet Mondrian’s painting of trees with students. Tell students that Piet Mondrian was known for his abstract works, but he began his early career making Impressionist paintings of the natural world. Ask students to analyze his transition to abstract art over time by discussing the following questions:
 - How does Mondrian’s use of color change over time? How does Mondrian’s use of shapes change over time? How do the angles in “*Evening, Red Tree*” contrast to the angles in “*Apple Tree, Blossoming*”?
- Briefly introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, showing examples such as *Unity Temple* and *Fallingwater* (which are not included in the matching game and won’t take away the challenge of the activity). Images can be found at teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/. Tell students that Wright created abstract depictions of objects in nature, just as van Doesburg and Mondrian did. Inform students that they will learn more about Wright’s geometric works by engaging in a matching game.

ENGAGE

- Display Images of Nature (Appendix C) to students. Ask students what shapes and lines they would include in an abstracted version of the object from nature. Instruct students to demonstrate the lines and forms using their body. Model the yoga pose “tree pose” as an example, to demonstrate how natural forms can be represented using the human body. Encourage students to spread out around the space and move creatively as they mimic forms of nature.
 - ◇ Optional Extension: Extend this activity by facilitating the *Yoga with Wright* lesson. Then continue with the remainder of the lesson in a second session.
- Tell the class that one half of the class will receive an image of art or architecture designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and the other half of the class will receive an image of an object from nature. Let students know that their goal will be to match each Wright design with the object from nature that it was inspired by. Each image of Wright’s design has one match to an image from nature. (15 sets of matching images are provided so that a class of 30 can participate. Remove sets of images as necessary depending on the class size.)
 - ◇ Optional Differentiation: Instead of giving one image to each student, pair students up and give one image to each pair. See the answer key for more information about matches that are more challenging and omit these for younger or smaller classes.
- Divide the class in half. Have the class stand up in a circle or two lines facing each other so that all students can see one another. Distribute images of Wright’s designs (Appendix B) and images of nature (Appendix C). Encourage students to hold up their images so that all students can see. As students hold up their images, remind them that Wright’s designs were heavily inspired by nature, so their image may appear to match with multiple other images. Tell students not to settle on their first match, but examine all possibilities before deciding on a match. Instruct students to look for similar colors, shapes, lines, patterns and forms to find their match.

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

- Next, direct all students to walk around the room to search for their image's match. Instruct students to sit down with their partner once they've found their image's match.
- Visit students who are seated. If students are seated with a match different than that on the Answer Key (Appendix D), ask them why they chose that match. Tell them to remember their initial match and why they believe their images fit together. Then, encourage them to search for a better match. If students are seated with their correct match as listed on the answer key, encourage students to discuss the following questions:
 - What does your image show? What does your partner's image show? How are your image and your partner's image similar? How are they different? How did Wright mimic nature in his design? What shapes and colors does Wright use to capture the object from nature in an abstract way?
 - ◇ Optional: Assign the half-sheet of challenge questions (Appendix E) for students who find their match early. This half-sheet can also be distributed as a homework assignment for after the lesson.
- After all students have found their correct match, ask each partnership to share their matches with the class. Repeat the same discussion questions above as a large group.

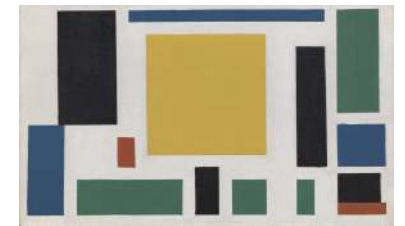
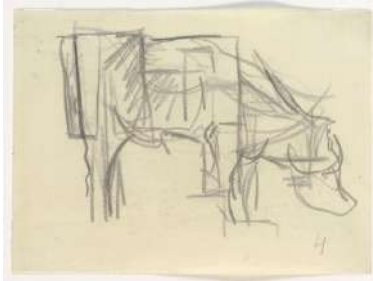
DESIGN

- Distribute the Thumbnail Worksheet (Appendix F). Ask students to sketch their image and their partner's image onto their worksheet. Direct students to sketch the image of nature on the left in the "Reality" box and the image of Wright's design in the "Abstract" box. Remind students that they are only sketching, and they do not need to capture every detail in their drawing.
- Next, challenge students to create a sketch in the middle thumbnail box, that blurs the line between abstraction and reality. Encourage students to reference the work of the *De Stijl* artists discussed at the beginning of the lesson and the stages of abstraction of the Hollyhock plant on their worksheet as examples. Ask students to recreate this sequence for their partnership's images.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Provide students with tape to hang up their Thumbnail Worksheet. Ask students to hang up their work on the walls or whiteboard to form a Gallery.
- Instruct students to view their classmates' work in a Gallery Walk. As students view the work, direct them to take note of different techniques used to create the Simplified Reality sketch. Discuss methods for giving positive feedback to peers. Give each student at least 2 Post-it notes to leave positive feedback on their classmates' work as they view.
- After students have completed leaving feedback, have them reflect on the lesson through a discussion. Ask students:
 - How did you and your classmates interpret Wright's art and architecture? What elements did your classmates use to capture reality? What elements did your classmates use to capture abstraction? What techniques did you and your classmates use to make your Simplified Reality sketch smoothly transition from Reality to Abstract? What did you find easy/challenging about this activity?

Abstract art aims to capture the composition and essence of a subject, without showing the subject realistically. Abstract art uses bold shapes, colors and textures to represent the subject. Observe the progression below to see how Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian, founding members of *De Stijl* art movement, create abstracted representations of nature. Van Doesburg transforms a sketch of a cow by breaking down the animal into its simplest forms. Piet Mondrian transforms his paintings of trees geometrically over time.



Theo van Doesburg,
Studies for Composition (The Cow), 1917

Theo van Doesburg,
Composition VIII
(The Cow), 1918



Piet Mondrian,
Evening, Red Tree, 1909



Piet Mondrian,
Grey Tree, 1911

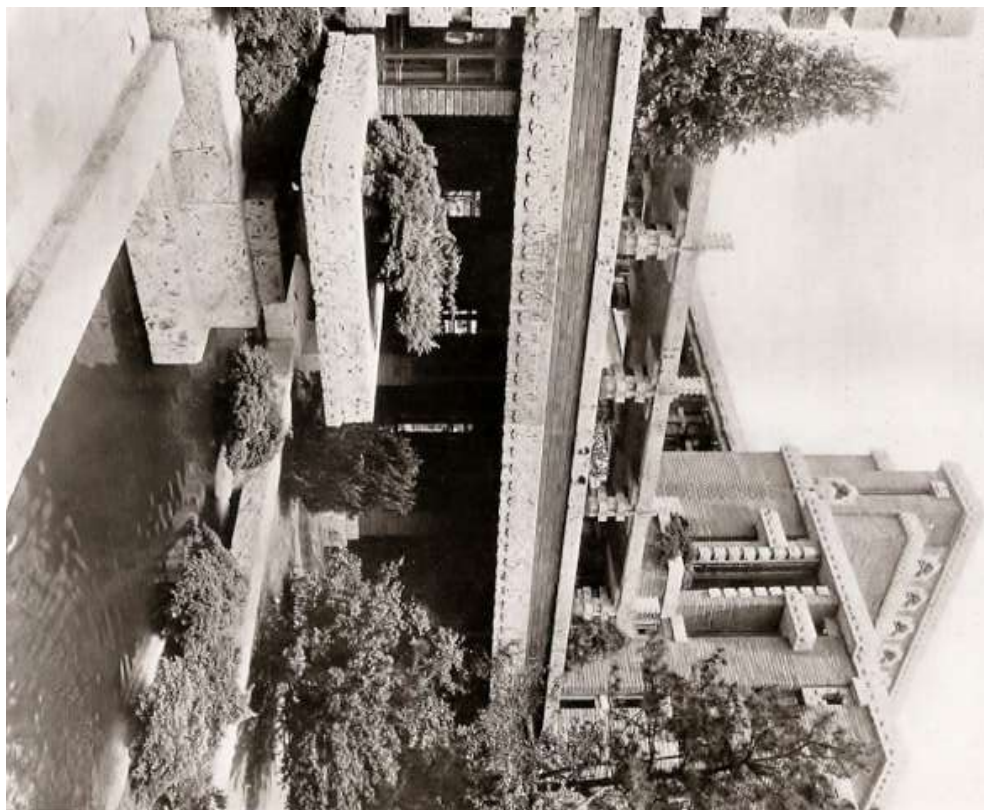


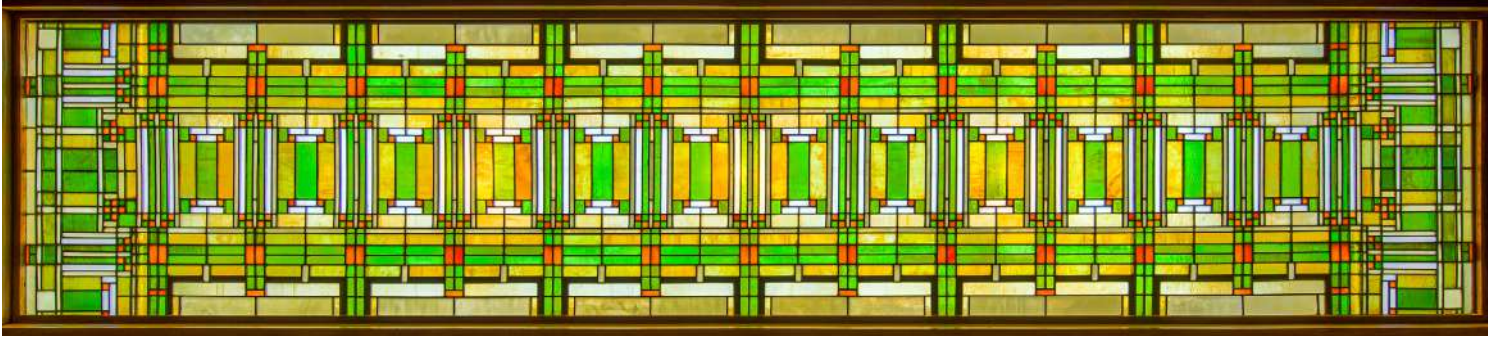
Piet Mondrian,
Apple Tree, Blossoming, 1912

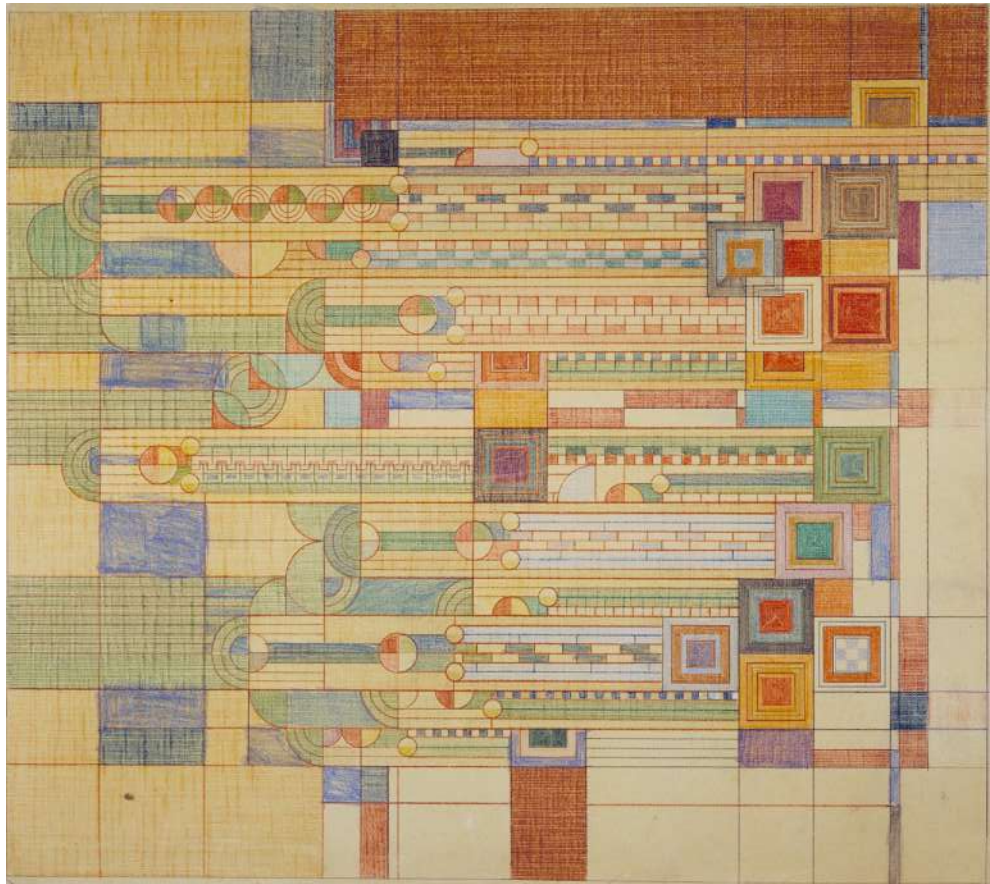
IMAGES OF WRIGHT'S DESIGNS

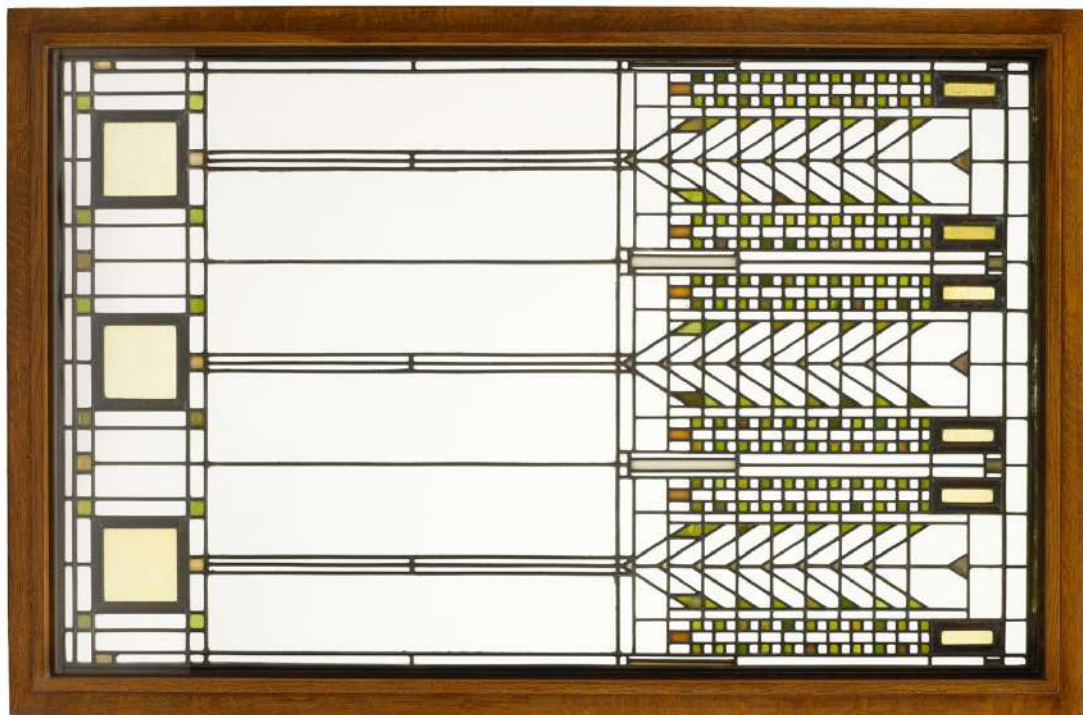










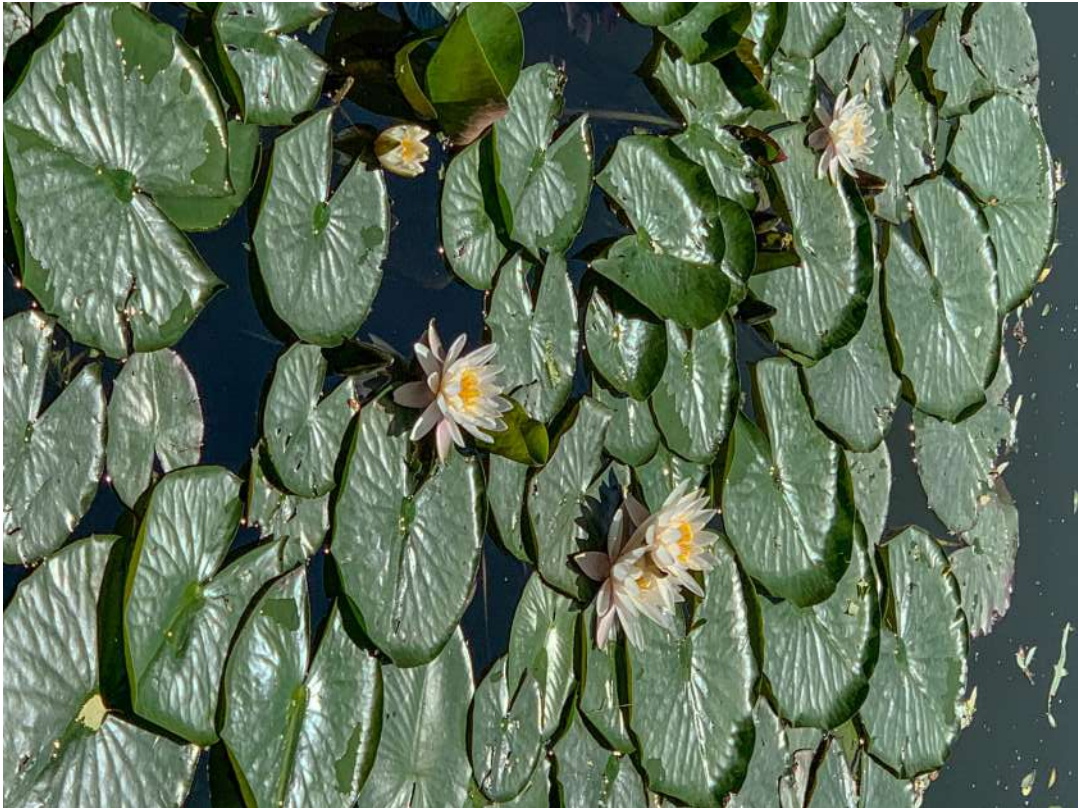






IMAGES OF NATURE













"Three Trees Reflection" by Morey Gers







Photo Credits

Images of Wright's Designs

Architectural Record
Art Institute of Chicago
James Caulfield
Dezeen Magazine
Steve Vaught
Flora-Monroe Township Public Library
The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The
Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine
Arts Library, Columbia University, New York)
Phoenix Magazine
State Historic Sites at Springfield
Unsplash (David Emrich)

Images of Nature

Flickr
Home for the Harvest
Morey Gers
Pexels (Ksenia Koshina)
Pexels (Quang-Nguyen-Vinh, Miriam Fischer)
Prairie State Conservation Coalition
Toyko Weekender
Univeristy of Florida
Unsplash (Tomasz-Filipek, Motaz Tawfik, Veronica
Gomez Ibarra, Jeremy Alford, Giulia May, Jerry
Zhang)

ANSWER KEY

1. Oak Park Home & Studio's
Playroom Windows = Tulips



5. Susan Lawrence Dana
House Windows = Sumac 🔥



9. Imperial Hotel Rug = Peacock



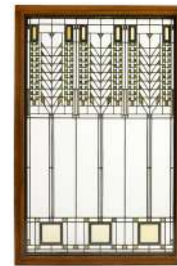
2. Frederick C. Robie House =
Prairie Landscape



6. Imperial Hotel = Volcanic Ōya
Stone 🔥



10. Darwin D. Martin House
Tree of Life Windows = Trees



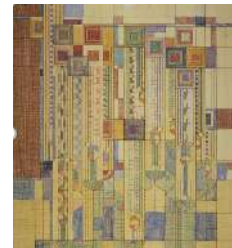
3. Oak Park Home & Studio's Dining
Room Windows = Lotus Leaves



7. Oak Park Home & Studio
Reception Hall Skylight = View of
Treetops



11. Saguaro Forms & Cactus Flowers
Sketch = Saguaro 🔥



4. Dana-Thomas House Dining
Room Window = Wheat



8. John E. Christian House Living
Room Carpet = Samara 🔥



12. Dana-Thomas House
Lamp = Butterfly



APPENDIX D

cont.

ANSWER KEY

13. S. C. Johnson Wax Company
Great Workroom = Lily Pads



14. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
= Shell



15. Taliesin West = Mountain Range



CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

1. Where is each image from (what region/climate)?
2. In what kind of building/room/area might your design by Wright belong? Why?
3. What materials make up Wright's design? Why may have Wright chosen those materials?



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THUMBNAIL WORKSHEET

APPENDIX F

Reality

Sketch the object as it appears in nature.



Simplified Reality

Sketch a simplified version of the object, focusing on the object's geometric forms.



Abstract

Sketch Wright's abstracted representation of the object.



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