

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND UNPLUGGED PLAY

GRADE: 4-12

TIME: Three 50-minute sessions

It may be true that all we really need to know we learned in kindergarten. The lessons from kindergarten influenced the work of the great American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. In this lesson participants will explore the methods of Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of kindergarten, and how these methods influenced the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. Participants will investigate the idea of play, and the homes where Wright created playrooms, as well as design a playroom of their own.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Math, Social Studies, Social-Emotional Learning

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Graph paper or white drawing paper

Frank Lloyd Wright biography (included)

Pencils

Erasers

Colored pencils

Rulers

A variety of simple toys (Examples: Froebel blocks, jacks, pick-up sticks, chalk, jump ropes)

Internet access for research

1. Examine the playrooms in the homes of Frank Lloyd Wright such as the Avery Coonley House in Riverside, IL, the Home and Studio in Oak Park, IL, and the Robie House in Chicago, IL.
2. Explore the teaching methods of Friedrich Froebel and the invention of kindergarten.
3. Design an unplugged playroom for yourself or other children. Incorporate the ideas you have researched.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How did kindergarten influence the architecture and life of Frank Lloyd Wright?
2. What are the benefits of play for all ages?
3. How would you design a space to encourage play?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- Utilize the included appendix about Frank Lloyd Wright to teach your students about his life and work.
 - ◇ Differentiation: Allow your students to do personal or group research about Frank Lloyd Wright and have students present what they learned to the class.
- Share images of the Coonley playroom windows, the Oak Park Home and Studio playroom windows, and the Robie House windows along with the floorplan. Ask participants to research the influences of the windows. Visit <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/105203/triptych-window-from-the-coonley-playhouse-riverside-illinois>
- Examine the mural from the Oak Park Playroom. The mural is inspired by the story of the “Fisherman and the Genie” from *One Thousand and One Nights*, also known as *Arabian Nights*. Ask participants what story might influence their own playroom. Visit https://youtu.be/lMr_fPEHcgo?si=LLZ2k_vtESOpKm7u
- Examine the floorplan and images of the Robie House in Chicago. Ask participants where the playroom is located and why? Visit <https://www.archdaily.com/60246/ad-classics-frederick-c-robie-house-frank-lloyd-wright>

ENGAGE

Session One

- Introduce Friedrich Froebel and the invention of kindergarten. Froebel began the first kindergarten to allow children opportunities to socialize and learn. Visit <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/little-history-american-kindergartens-180963263/>
- Provide participants time to play with small manipulative toys, preferably blocks, if available. Ask participants to reflect on how they felt after the playtime.

DESIGN

Session Two

- Ask students to draw or describe a playroom design or plan. Students may use graph paper or drawing paper. Challenge the participants to make their playroom unplugged, meaning all the games and toys are non-electronic. Students may want to list games, describe storage, consider music-making options, dress-ups, and imaginative play.
- Encourage participants to research stories and fairy tales or consider other ideas for a mural or wall decoration.
- Provide opportunities for students to play board games, cards or other games in pairs or groups.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Three

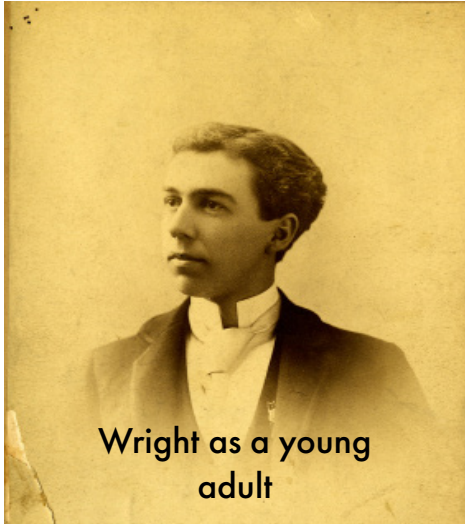
- Encourage small group discussions of design ideas, drawings, or lists. Include game or toy ideas. Allow time for participants to rework their drawings or to add to their lists.
- Ask participants how they felt after having open-ended playtime, and what games they enjoyed and why.
- Ask students to record any reactions they have from being away from electronic devices.
- Challenge students to recall any lessons or experiences from kindergarten that are still part of their lives today. Ask students to share these experiences.

WHO IS FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT?



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Frank Lloyd Wright was born in 1867 in Richland Center, Wisconsin. When he was a child, his mother gave him a special set of toys called Froebel Blocks. Wright loved learning about shapes and geometry as he played with the blocks. When Wright was a teenager, he worked on his uncle's farm. He discovered that he loved plants, animals, and nature. He was inspired by the long, flat landscapes of the prairies near his family's home.

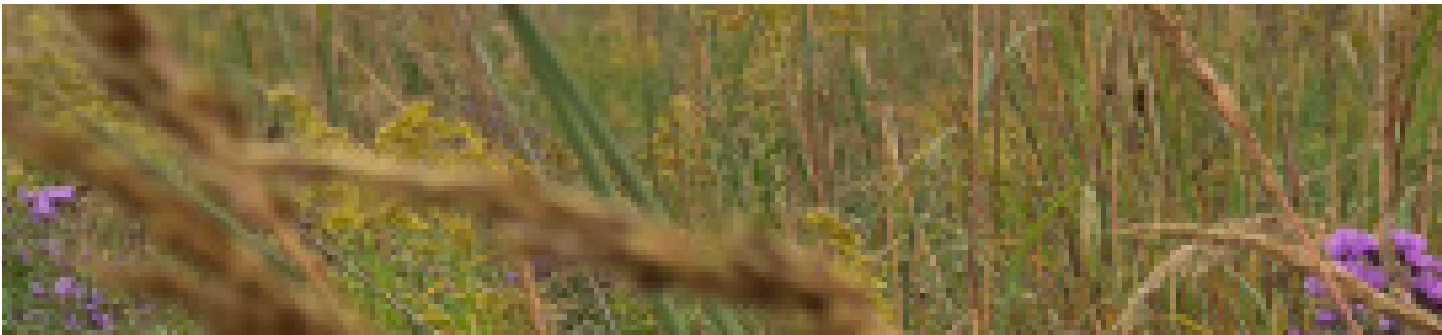


Wright as a young adult



Froebel Blocks, Sets 3 & 4

When Wright grew up, he decided to become an architect. An architect is someone who designs buildings. He was inspired by his love of shapes and nature to design a new style of buildings. Wright moved to Chicago, where he designed hundreds of homes, including one for himself and his family. During his time in Chicago, Wright created the Prairie style, which is a type of architecture inspired by the long lines of the American prairie and focuses on the connection between a building and its nearby environment.



After living in Chicago, Wright moved back to Wisconsin, and eventually Arizona. He designed buildings all over the United States, including homes, offices, and even a museum. Some of Wright's most notable buildings are his Home and Studio in Oak Park and the Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago. They use natural colors and materials to blend in with the environment.



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Wright passed away in 1959 in Phoenix, Arizona. Wright's career lasted nearly seventy years. He became famous for his new style of design and is still known as one of the most famous architects in the United States.

