

SIGNATURE DESIGN

GRADE: Middle School, High School

TIME: 60 MINUTES

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 and were also meant to communicate what he wanted others to know about his work and designs. Through this lesson, participants explore symbols, iconography, and imagery, and then design their own logo for one of Wright's three most iconic designs, Frederick C. Robie House, Fallingwater, and the Guggenheim.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Art, Language Arts, & Social Studies

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of:

Stork Columns at the Home and Studio
Frederick C. Robie House
Fallingwater
Guggenheim

Drawing paper

Sketchbooks

Pencils

Markers

Color Pencils

Colored Paper

Optional: SketchUp or Tinkercad

1. Explore imagery, symbols, and iconography.
2. Understand how Frank Lloyd Wright used visual elements to communicate with the public.
3. Connect Wright's use of symbols to the contemporary practice of branding and logos.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is a symbol and what is its purpose?
2. What symbols do we encounter on daily basis?
3. What strategies or methods are used when communicating visually?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

- Present participants with an image of the Stork Columns outside the Oak Park Home and Studio. Images available at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>
- Provide a few minutes for participants to quietly observe and look at Wright's design. Then ask: What do you see? What is the relationship between each of the symbols (stork, tree, blueprint, and book)? Where are these symbols located or placed? Why? What is their purpose? What is Wright trying to communicate? Is it successful?
 - Stork: Fertility of ideas, creativity
 - Tree: Tree of life
 - Book: Book of Knowledge
 - Blueprint: Architect's plan

ENGAGE

- Direct discussion to begin addressing the concept of symbols. Ask: What is a symbol? What is a symbol used for? What symbols do you encounter on a daily basis? What symbol do you regularly use? Why? What are you communicating to others? What makes a successful symbol? What are examples of successful and unsuccessful symbols? What things do you consider when creating a symbol or when you are trying to visually communicate something? Does a symbol have the same meaning to everyone? How do you know what you are communicating?

DESIGN

- Explore Wright's three most iconic designs together, the Frederick C. Robie House, Fallingwater, and the Guggenheim. Information about the Robie House is available at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/robie-house/>
- Discuss design elements, symbols that can be identified, and how the design gives clues to each building's function. (<https://www.teachingbydesign.org/design-elements/elements-of-design/>)
- Have participants choose one of the three iconic designs and create a symbol or logo to represent it.
- Optional: Designs can be drafted digitally with SketchUp or Tinkercad to further develop skills with technology.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Display the participant logos and have the group guess which of the three Wright designs each represents.
- Discuss the process together and have participants reflect on their own work.