

Examining Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: Exploring Wright’s Journey to Japan in 1905

Center for East Asian Studies – Frank Lloyd Wright Teaching Initiative

By: Michelle Pearson (Adams 12 School District)

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Using the primary and secondary sources included in this inquiry kit, take a deeper dive into Frank Lloyd Wright's journey to Japan, one which provided an opportunity to explore the country, architecture, art, and people. This journey not only inspired Wright, but gave him a sense of rest and renewal, and inspired the collection of over 200 Hiroshige prints which he later used to curate exhibits in the United States. This inquiry lesson is supported by resources

GRADE LEVEL

This lesson is written for the middle school grade level (6-8) but can be adapted for a variety of grade levels depending on the needs of the instructor, time allotted for teaching this content, or for the needs and abilities of the students. The lessons can be adapted for upper elementary or high school with ease by considering the use of higher-level questioning techniques or more basic analysis strategies.

CLASSROOM TIME

Two 70-minute class periods should suffice for the teaching of this lesson and the inquiry activities suggested. This may be shortened or lengthened with additional suggested activities in the post-lesson strategies and assessment sections.

RESOURCES

Resources included in this lesson are from the University of Wisconsin Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese Art Teaching Initiative, the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, and the Visualizing Cultures Project from MIT. Primary sources in the appendix are linked with their original title and web address. Other resources are listed below for reference.

Frank Lloyd Wright Trust. “1905: Japan Through the Lens of Frank Lloyd Wright.” *Frank Lloyd Wright in Japan*, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, 2017, <https://www.wrightsjapan1905.org/>. Accessed 7 7 2021.

Marks, Andreas. *Japan Journeys: Famous Woodblock Prints of Cultural Sights in Japan*. 1 ed., Rutland, Tuttle Publishing, 2015.

MIT Visualizing Cultures Website. “Selling Shiseido.” *MIT Visualizing Cultures*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010, http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/shiseido_03/sh_gal_11_thumb.html. Accessed 9 7 2021.

Seacrest, Meryle. *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

BACKGROUND

Frank Lloyd Wright drew inspiration for his work from a multitude of inspiration points, and travel was one such focus for the architect. His trip to Japan in 1905 was a journey into the deeper parts of Japan, and he took his camera with him as so many others did at the same time. Writer Meryle Seacrest also points out that he may have needed rest, and was probably suffering exhaustion having recently been ill with tonsillitis. Wright was not unique in his choice to travel to the far east, but instead was part of a growing group of globetrotters from around the world who were descending upon Asia with a sense of inquiry and interest into this “exotic” land. They were eager to explore places filled with people, culture, art, and architecture which were different from what many Europeans and Americans were used to seeing at home.

Wright left for Japan with his wife Catherine and clients Ward and Cecilia Willits, with a desire to learn more about this country and to gain a deeper understanding of the geography, people, architecture, and particularly art. Additionally, scholars point to his growing interest in Japanese woodblock prints, an interest that may have been started at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 with a grand display of a temple and other buildings at the exposition. Researchers disagree whether this exposition was the main influence on Wright’s interest in Japan but Wright definitely had an interest in this region of the world as did the rest of the Arts and Crafts movement, and he embraced elements of Japanese design in his work.

The journey to Japan was a transformative one for Wright and lasting impacts on his work and private and public life can be seen today. He returned with an extensive collection of woodblock prints, many of which he put on exhibition in collaboration with other institutions, the organic designs in Japan reinforced his commitment to the same design elements in the United States and abroad, and he returned with a renewed sense of energy. (Seacrest, 186)

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to analyze primary source documents.
- Students will use inquiry skills to investigate Frank Lloyd Wright's Journey to Japan using print as well as digital resources.
- Students will be able to formulate an inquiry question about a primary source related to Frank Lloyd Wright’s journey to Japan.
- Students will be able to connect primary and secondary sources to learn more about the journey of Frank Lloyd Wright to Japan.

STANDARDS

National C3 Standards in Social Studies

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras

D2.His.12.6-8. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Social Studies (Grade 6-8)

SS.Inq3.b.m Support a claim with evidence from multiple reliable sources representing a range of media (electronic, digital, print, and other mass media).

SS.Inq4.a.m Communicate conclusions using a variety of media (i.e. video or online, documentaries, exhibits, research papers, or web pages).

SS.BH2.b.m Model how individuals learn the elements of their culture through interactions with others, and how individuals learn of other cultures through communication, travel, and study.

LESSON

Instructional Notes: This lesson can be completed in sequential order over a period of several class periods, or the activities may be separated apart into individual activities which can be used as extension activities in a different lesson, or embedded with other interdisciplinary units.

For the purpose of ease, the activities in this lesson are labeled individually, and may reference a certain strategy. If a particular strategy is used, the strategy instructions and support materials are attached to this lesson in the appendix, and a link to the appropriate website of reference is included for ease of access.

Lesson Opening Activity 1A:

Select a woodblock image from the collection attached, from the book *Japan Journeys*, or another one online from Hiroshige. Using the Library of Congress analysis technique analyze the image and record student observations and wonderings about the primary source. This can be completed as a large group or small group activity. Discuss both the natural and built structures (if present) contribute to the artistic nature of the print. If desired this can be done as a small group sharing activity with large group reflection/contributions to a brainstormed list on an anchor chart.

Lesson Opening Activity 1B:

Select a woodblock image from the collection attached, from the book *Japan Journeys*, or another one online from Hiroshige OR select an image from the Frank Lloyd Wright images in the collection from the Frank Lloyd Trust. Using the Right Question Institute Question Formulation Technique, have students create a series of questions based on the primary sources then select several questions that the group would like to investigate during this lesson.

Lesson Inquiry Exploration B:

Have students explore the interactive map and images in the online journey map provided by the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust. Have students write down information they have learned at each stop and then have them share their findings in a small or large group. A graphic organizer has been provided for use if desired. Have students answer the question(s):

*Based on the images you have seen on the map, what kinds of things was Wright seeing on his journey?
How did these things contribute to his understanding of Japanese culture and art?*

Lesson Text Connections Activity C:

Using one of the text selections from the curated collection of resources, or another one from online or the book *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography*, have students think about the statement in text, and then select an image they have found in their exploration online or the curated resources that reflects Wright's sentiment. If desired, one text selection may be used and the Think Pair Share strategy may be used.

Lesson Writing Activity D:

Have students examine the image from the Smithsonian Magazine which shows the woodblock print and the sketch from Frank Lloyd Wright. The students can also view the film from the Robie House providing a virtual tour. Based on what they have learned about Wright's Journey to Japan, how is Wright using an artist's touch from Japan to influence how he presents his own work to his clients?

Lesson Activity E:

After completing the journey on the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust's interactive map, have students visit the MIT Visualizing cultures website and the exhibit location here (http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/shiseido_03/sh_gal_11_thumb.html) How do the pictures they have seen compare to this collection? Can they find the hidden Wright image in this collection? How does this building in Japan compare to other buildings in the United States?

POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Group Collaborative Inquiry Kit:

Using a shared Google document such as the template in this lesson kit, have students collaboratively curate a collection of primary sources which represent one of the towns Wright would have visited with his wife and clients during his journey, and explain why that resource/Primary source is in the collection.

Digital Group Activity:

Using an appropriate digital tool, have students collect a series of woodblock prints that they feel Frank Lloyd Wright would have brought home with him from Japan. Using Padlet, or another digital tool such as a shared Google doc, Jamboard, or digital whiteboard, have students create a collection of woodblock prints which Wright could have brought home from Japan and include a quote from Frank Lloyd Wright about Japan that justifies the reason for the inclusion of that print in the collection.

Design Thinking:

Have students examine Wright's architecture (Sample images are included in the resources of this lesson) and explain in a Think Pair Share activity what components of Wright's architecture compare and contrast with Japanese Architecture from Wright's photographs and work.

Tweets and Texts:

Even today, our nation's library, the Library of Congress, is collecting many different types of primary sources, tweets from Twitter included. Have students create a series of tweets from Frank Lloyd Wright explaining what he is seeing in Japan and/or the art (Woodblocks) he is collecting on his journey.

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

Summative Exam:

Students can complete a summative exam with a series of lesson questions, reflections, and short answer essays based on the content of these resources and the timeline and journey exploration.

Essay Writing

Have students answer the question: *How did Frank Lloyd Wright's journey to Japan affect both his personal interest in Japanese Art and his design work as an architect?*

Other questions to consider include:

- *How did Frank Lloyd Wright use inquiry to explore the culture of Japan and then use elements of Japanese Art in his work?*
- *How did Frank Lloyd Wright help support the appreciation of Japanese Art and Culture in the United States after his trip to Japan?*

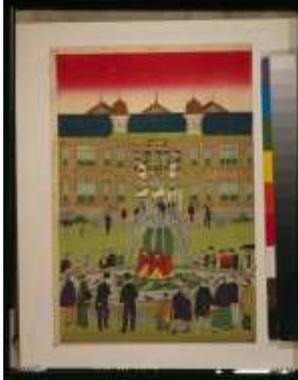
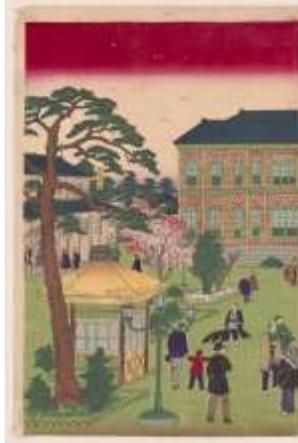
Digital Application (Individual):

Using an appropriate digital tool, have students collect a series of woodblock prints that they feel Frank Lloyd Wright would have brought home with him from Japan. Using reasoning and appropriate citations and images, create a slideshow presentation (Powerpoint or Google Slides), Glideshow presentation (A dobe Spark), presentation (Animoto), or other presentation which highlights their curated collection and captions.

Curated Resources for Use in this Lesson

The resources contained in this collection are meant to be thought-starters for this lesson and are not all inclusive. Many can be added from the links provided as resources. These will provide the basic foundation for the lesson and give educators and students a starting set of primary sources to work with.

<p>Interactive Map of Wrights Journey in Japan</p> <p>Activity B and E</p>	<p>Smithsonian Magazine: Frank Lloyd Wright Credited Japan for His All-American Aesthetic</p> <p>Activity: D</p>	<p>Smithsonian Magazine: Frank Lloyd Wright Credited Japan for His All-American Aesthetic</p> <p>Activity: C</p>	<p>Robie House Virtual Tour</p> <p>Activity: D</p>
		<p><i>“When I first saw a fine print about twenty five years ago it was an intoxicating thing. At that time Ernest Fenollosa was doing his best to persuade the Japanese people not to wantonly destroy their works of art.... Fenollosa, the American, did more than anyone else to stem the tide of this folly. On one of his journeys home he brought many beautiful prints, those I made mine were the narrow tall decorative form hashirakake...”</i></p>	
<p>https://www.wrightsia.com/pan1905.org/map/</p>	<p>https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/frank-lloyd-wrights-japanese-education-180963617/</p>	<p>https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/frank-lloyd-wrights-japanese-education-180963617/</p>	<p>https://flwright.org/education/wright-at-home/virtual-tours-resources-adults</p>

<p>Tōto meguro yuhhigaoka</p> <p>Activity A</p>	<p>Ueno kōen naikoku kangyō daini hakurankai bijutsukan narabini [shojo] funsuiki no zu</p> <p>Activity A</p>	<p>Ueno kōen naikoku kangyō daini hakurankai bijutsukan narabini [shojo] funsuiki no zu</p> <p>Activity A</p>	<p>Robie House Virtual Tour</p> <p>Activity D and E</p>
			
<p>https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/jpd.01307/?co=jpd</p>	<p>https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3g10436/?co=jpd</p>	<p>https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.57455/?co=jpd</p>	<p>https://flwright.org/education/wright-at-home/virtual-tours-resources-adults</p>

<p>Traditional Japanese Art as a Means to Organic Architecture</p> <p>Activity B</p>	<p>MIT Visualizing Cultures Exhibit</p> <p>Activity E</p>	<p>1914 Quote in his Autobiography</p> <p>Activity C</p>	<p>Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of Photographs</p> <p>Activity: All Lessons</p>
		<p>I saw the native home in Japan as a supreme study in elimination—not only of dirt, but the elimination of the insignificant.... I found this ancient Japanese dwelling to be a perfect example of the modern standardizing I had myself been working out.</p>	
<p>https://flwright.org/researchexplore/nutevideo</p>	<p>http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/shiseido_03/sh_gal_11_thumb.html</p>	<p>https://libquotes.com/frank-lloyd-wright/quote/lbq0e2g</p>	<p>https://www.wrightsjapan1905.org/photographs/</p>

Think Pair Share Activity

Examine the primary or secondary source your teacher has given your group.

Think On your own, write three ideas you have about this question or problem:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Pair Discuss your ideas with a partner. Put a check by any ideas, above, that your partner also wrote down. Then, write down ideas your partner had that you did not have:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Share Review all of your ideas and circle the one you think is most important. One of you will share this idea with the whole group. As you listen to the ideas of the whole group, write down three more ideas you liked:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Right Question Institute Question Formulation Technique

Resources and facilitation materials can be found at rightquestion.org

[Right Question Institute Question Formulation Technique \(One Page Resource for Students \)](#)

[Right Question Institute Question Formulation Technique \(One Page Resource for Teachers \)](#)

[Right Question Institute Powerpoint for use in the classroom](#)

Journey through Japan: Frank Lloyd Wright's Visit in 1905

Stop: What stop are you visiting on the map?	Facts: What are two things you have learned?	What is special about this image/resource? What do you notice about the resource that is shown at this stop?