Frank Lloyd Wright and Daoism
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ABOUT THIS LESSON
In this 2-hour, multi-part lesson, students will synthesize analysis of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural style, examples of Daoist architectural style, and Daoist poetry to develop an argument as to whether Wright's architecture reflects Daoist architecture or beliefs.

GRADE LEVEL
9-12

CLASSROOM TIME
2 hours, plus homework

RESOURCES
- "Daoist Poets." Edited by Abichal Watkins and Tejvan Pettinger, *Poet Seers*, www.poetseers.org/spiritual-and-devotional-poets/chinese/.
- Granger, Ivan M. "Poetry Chaikhana." *Poetry Chaikhana | Taoist Poets and Poetry*, 2021, www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Traditions/Taoist/.
- Harris, Wendy. *"Daoist Temples and Engawa."* *https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1IREosSK9Ig5Xq1Nf2X8ULtKXr4Ln5vo0lb6g 1NuIk68/edit?usp=sharing*
- Kochmer, Casey. "Classical Taoist Poetry." *Personal Tao*, http://personaltao.com/zen/tao-poems/.
- Weintraub, Alan, and Alan Hess. *Frank Lloyd Wright Natural Design: Organic Architecture, Lessons for Building Green from American Original*. Rizzoli, 2012.

BACKGROUND
The students have background knowledge on Daoism. They have studied poetry in English classes and American Sign Language classes. We have also used poetry as primary sources in history classes.

OBJECTIVES
Students will:
- Analyze Frank Lloyd's architecture and name at least 2 common elements.
- Analyze examples of Japanese architecture (Daoist temples and Engawa) and name at least 2 common elements.
- Analyze examples of Daoist poetry and name at least 2 common elements that reflect Daoist beliefs.
- Present an argument with at least 3 pieces of evidence to justify whether Wright's architectural style reflects Daoist architecture or beliefs.

STANDARDS
Minnesota State Standards (World History)
- Analyze the emergence, development, and impact of religions and philosophies of this era, including Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity. (Classical Traditions, Belief Systems, and Giant Empires: 2000 BCE—600 CE)

Minnesota State Standards (US History)

- Describe the contributions of individuals and communities in relation to the art, literature and music of the period. (Great Depression and World War II: 1920—1945)

LESSON

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Ask students: *How does architecture reflect place and culture?* (It may be helpful to show a collection of images from around the world, such as those found at https://www.archdaily.com/898253/25-examples-of-vernacular-housing-from-around-the-world)
- Ask students if they have ever heard of Frank Lloyd Wright and what they know. If they have limited knowledge, share a short biography.
- Explain to students that this lesson will involve them analyzing Wright's architecture for evidence of culture and place. Introduce the guiding question: *Does Wright's architecture reflect Daoist beliefs or architecture?*

Analysis of Wright's architectural style (30 minutes)

- Distribute images of Wright's architectural style from Weintraub's book to small groups. This may be done in a variety of ways, such as by having small groups of students look at copies of the book itself, by scanning selected images to a slideshow, or by making photocopies of selected images.
- Instruct students to work in small groups, select images of at least 5 different buildings, and to analyze the architecture using these questions:
    - What is the building built for?
    - What materials are used?
    - How much natural light is visible in the building? How does the architecture use light?
    - What are at least 2 features common among the different buildings?
    - What features are unique that you have not seen in other buildings before?
- Bring the students to a whole group and share the elements they noticed with each question, creating collective lists for each question.

Daoism and architecture (30 minutes)

- Lead a discussion with students to review key beliefs of Daoism, being sure to include translation of Dao as "the way" and the importance of being in harmony with nature.
- Share the Japanese Daoist Temples and Engawa slideshow. Lead students in an analysis of this architecture using the same questions as before:
    - What is the building built for?
    - What materials are used?
    - How much natural light is visible in the building? How does the architecture use light?
    - What are at least 2 features common among the different buildings?
    - What features are unique that you have not seen in other buildings before?
- Create a whole-class list of their answers to these questions.

- Refer back to the guiding question, telling students that some people say Wright's architecture reflects Daoism and other people say it does not. Their job will be to develop an argument for one of these perspectives using evidence from Daoist poetry, traditional Japanese architecture and Wright's architecture.

Exploration of Daoist poetry (30 minutes)
- Direct students to use the three websites of Daoist poetry or another source of Daoist poetry to select 3 poems they feel best reflect the basic beliefs of Daoism.
- Have students share their 3 poems in small groups and explain what aspects (for example, particular imagery or sentiments) of the poem they find to particularly reflect Daoism.
- Each small group should develop a list of 3 most common aspects of the poetry they found.
- Bring the whole group together and create a collective list of common aspects of Daoist poetry that reflect the beliefs of Daoism.

Synthesis: Comparison of Wright's architecture, traditional Japanese architecture and poetry (15 minutes)
- Have students create a 3-way Venn diagram comparing the three topics they have analyzed in this lesson - Wright's architectural style, traditional Japanese architecture as seen in Daoist temples and engawa, and Daoist poetry. This can be done individually, in small groups, or as a whole class. Encourage students to refer back to the collective lists created by the class in their work.

Evaluation (homework)
- Bring students back to the guiding question: Does Wright's architecture reflect Daoist beliefs or architecture?
- Direct students to create an argument including a thesis and at least 3 pieces of evidence to justify either a "yes" or "no" answer to the guiding question.