

Japan's Influence on American Architecture: Frank Lloyd Wright & Japan

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ABOUT THIS LESSON

Using the images & the presentation provided, students will compare traditional Japanese architecture (woodblock prints) from the Edo period to structures built by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. This lesson is designed to increase students' visual awareness of the impact different cultures have on one another through cultural diffusion.

GRADE LEVEL

This lesson was created for students of all levels of world history and geography (high school, 9th-12th grade).

CLASSROOM TIME

Approximately 1-2 class periods - depending on students' familiarity with analyzing primary source documents and/or any extensions individual teachers may include.

RESOURCES

Japanese Woodblock Prints:

- 1) The Great Temple, Ando Hiroshige, Japanese, 1797–1858
- 2) Year End Fair at Kinryuzan Temple ca. 1836
- 3) Evening Snow at Kanbara, from the series "Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō" ca. 1833–34
- 4) The Spiral Hall of the Temple of the Five Hundred Arhats, from the series Famous Place in Edo – Hiroshige
- 5) Inokashira no ike benzaiten no yashiro

Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie Style & Others Structures:

- 1) William H. Winslow House, 1893, EarlyPrairie Style - FLW
- 2) Robie House, Chicago, IL (1910) - Most Famous Prairie Style House - FLW
- 3) Coonley House, Riverside, IL (1908) - FLW
- 4) Falling Water, Mill Run, PA (1936) - FLW
- 5) Taliesin, Spring Green, WI (1911) - FLW
- 6) Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ (1937) - FLW

BACKGROUND

During the early 1900s, nationalism not only was playing out on the global stage, but it was strongly present in the lives of individual people. These nationalistic feelings motivated people around the globe to create literature, ideals, and works that were unique and influenced by their experiences. Frank Lloyd Wright was a part of this world; influenced by this period as well as the Edo period in Japan. As intrigued as he was by all things Japan, he too, would have been influenced by the global sentiment of nationalism. This was made manifest by his strong desire to create a unique and distinct form of American architecture. Wright intended to set the United States distinctly apart from the European style of classical Greek and Roman architecture with his new style, Prairie Style. And with the help of traditional Japanese architecture, Wright successfully accomplished what he set out to do.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Analyze Japanese prints and photos of Wright designed buildings - comparing and contrasting design elements
- Identify elements of woodblock prints (Edo Japan) in FLW's work
- Identify Japanese connection to nature
- Compare and contrast elements of FLW architecture and Japanese architecture
- Recognize cultural diffusion of ideas

STANDARDS

AP World History Key Concept:

KC-5.3.II.i: Nationalism also became a major force shaping the historical development of states and empires

Arizona State Standards:

Arizona Anchor Standard: H4: Patterns of social and political interactions have shaped people, places, and events throughout history and continue to shape the modern world.

Arizona Standard: HS.SP1.1: Evaluate how events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader contexts

Arizona Standard: HS.SP3.2: Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the source to guide the selection.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Social Studies (Grade 12 benchmarks):

SS.Hist2: Wisconsin students will analyze, recognize, and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time and contextualization of historical events.

SS.Hist3: Wisconsin students will connect past events, people, and ideas to the present; use different perspectives to draw conclusions; and suggest current implications.

SS.Hist4: Wisconsin students will evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources to interpret the historical context, intended audience, purpose, or author's point of view (historical methodology)

LESSON

This lesson was designed to increase students' ability to compare & contrast past historical documents with modern images as well as students' awareness of cultural diffusion in regards to Japan.

Before starting this lesson, the teacher should review cultural diffusion & nationalism as a motivator to action with students.

Then, the teacher should present the presentation "Japan's Influence on American Architecture."

As the teacher is presenting, students should draw the different elements of traditional Japanese architecture on paper so they have a guide to refer to when viewing the woodblock prints and buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright.

After presenting "Elements of Japanese Architecture," the teacher will continue the presentation to the "Identifying Elements of Traditional Japanese Architecture" portion of the lesson and have students verbally identify the elements of traditional Japanese architecture in the woodblock prints.

Finally, students will compare & contrast the elements of traditional Japanese architecture with the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings in the presentation. These slides may also be printed for small group work.

Students should then work together to answer questions such as:

- 1) To what extent did Frank Lloyd Wright gain inspiration from traditional Japanese architecture?
- 2) What comparisons do you see between the two different styles?

- 3) What differences do you see between the two different styles?
- 4) What lessons can we learn from cultural diffusion & its influence?
- 5) What are good and bad elements of cultural diffusion?
- 6) What are ways cultural diffusion can positively and/or negatively affect our relationship with other countries?

There are a variety of post activities that teachers may choose to do with time allowing or to challenge more advanced students.

POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Research other American architects that were contemporaries of Frank Lloyd Wright and see if Wright's ideas from Japan influenced other architects.

Watch videos on the individual elements of traditional Japanese architecture for a deeper understanding of the importance of those elements. Example below:

 The Architecture of the Japanese Engawa or Porch

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

Assessment options can range from:

- Having students create some questions for a summative exam based on their learning along with a variety of teacher-generated questions;
- Writing a compare and contrast or continuity and change over time essay;
- Creating a presentation on another architect influenced by Japan or the pros and cons of cultural diffusion