

THE ART OF CONSTRUCTION

Grade Level: 3 to 5

IN THIS LESSON

Taking on the roles of architect and builder, students will explore architectural artifacts and then use their creativity and cooperative skills to design and construct their own buildings.

OBJECTIVES

- To learn about architecturally significant buildings in Chicago
- To develop an understanding of the roles of architect and builder in the construction process
- To learn how to interpret visual information and improve visual literacy
- To develop artistic skills, creativity, and teamwork

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

FINE ARTS

Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

SUGGESTED ARTIFACTS

Architectural elements: door knobs, hinges, locks/keys, brackets, house numbers, mailboxes, plumbing fixtures, finials, etc.

Architectural fragments: terra cotta, brick, plaster, etc.

Please note: Your artifact kit may also include tools used by architects and builders such as:

Drafting tools: T-square, compass, blue prints, renderings, templates, etc.

Computer Aided Design (CAD) templates and/or printouts

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Artifact Analysis worksheets (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/classroom/artifact.php>)

Chart paper

Art supplies

Construction toys or marshmallows/toothpicks

Printouts of Chicago landmark photographs:

<http://www.chicagohistory.org/mychicago/sbook/sbook22.jpg>

<http://www.chicagohistory.org/mychicago/sbook/sbook13.jpg>

<http://www.chicagohistory.org/mychicago/sbook/sbook14.jpg>

<http://www.chicagohistory.org/mychicago/sbook/sbook15.jpg>

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This lesson was developed and written by Aspasia DeMeros.

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ACTIVITY

DAY 1

1. Begin with a bell-ringer question such as how tall is the Sears Tower? Then lead a discussion about architecture's important role in the history of Chicago. Define architect and builder for students and discuss the role each plays in creating a building.
2. Divide the class in half—one half architects and the other half builders. Then distribute an artifact to each student to examine in-depth. You might want to give the architects drafting-oriented artifacts and the builders the blueprints, architectural fragments, and other material-related artifacts.
3. Have students complete an Artifact Analysis worksheet for their artifact.
4. Students should then give a brief oral presentation about their artifact.

DAY 2

1. Share images of famous Chicago buildings with the class and ask why students think they are considered remarkable. What materials are the buildings made of? What does the construction material tell students about when the structures were built?
2. Divide the class in half. On large sheets of chart paper, have each group draw a building from their imagination. Provide books and/or magazines to inspire ideas. Let students work for about 15 minutes.
3. Have the groups switch drawings. Now each group will build the other group's design using the drawing as a blueprint. Provide construction toys such as Legos, Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys, or K'nex. You can also use marshmallows and toothpicks.
4. Have the groups present their building to the class, describing the hows and whys of what they did.

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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Using their math skills, have students transfer their drawings to graph paper and build a scale model of their design.

The Chicago Skyline game on the My Chicago website teaches kids about landmark Chicago buildings and lets them build their own skyline. <http://www.chicagohistory.org/mychicago/03sky.html>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For a general introduction to architecture, see *Architects Make Zigzags: Looking at Architecture from A to Z* by Diane Maddex and Roxie Munro (Preservation Press).

The following resources offer information about architecture in Chicago:

Chicago Then and Now by Elizabeth McNulty

Chicago Visitor's Map and Guide by Irving Weisdorf & Company

Eyewitness Travel Guide to Chicago by DK Travel Writers

Chicago's 50 Best Places to Take Children by City and Company

VanDam Street Smart Chicago (map)