

Background Information
Found at www.fallingwater.org

Frank Lloyd Wright began his career in 1889 and, early on, took a job at the firm of the famed architect Louis Sullivan in Chicago, Illinois. Asked to leave when it was discovered he was soliciting his own commissions, he set up a practice of his own in his Oak Park home. There he perfected his signature Prairie Style. Emphasizing open spaces and shallow, sloping rooflines, the Prairie Style of residential design was extremely influential and is considered a milestone in modern architecture. He later purchased a plot of ancestral land in Wisconsin, where he would build his renowned retreat and studio, Taliesin. While Taliesin was formally an institute for artistic growth, Wright also used the school as a way to explore his ideas of organic architecture.

Wright believed he had a colorful genius and was the innovator of the "organic" approach to modern architectural design and construction. Wright believed that art has a humane and noble task to serve man in harmony with his natural surroundings.

Living at Taliesin and overseeing a stable of young apprentices, Wright's work had once been the toast of the architectural world. Since he had begun his practice in 1889, he had designed literally hundreds of buildings and achieved an international reputation. But by the mid-1920's, Wright's star had faded; largely a marked shift in architecture toward a more functional, mechanical design style.

Wright's encounter with Edgar Kaufmann Sr. was fortuitous because Wright was entering one of the most creative and insightful periods of his life. Much of his time during this period was devoted to his own concept for a new urban ideal he called "Broadacre City". Brimming with fresh ideas and a search of his big comeback commission, Wright was on the brink of a career breakthrough. (Fallingwater)

Over the course of his career, Frank Lloyd Wright built more than four hundred structures and designed at least twice that many. More than half of those built came into being after the enormous critical and popular success of Fallingwater.

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Fallingwater- is a living, breathing house in perfect harmony with its setting. It is today, arguably Frank Lloyd Wright's finest work and the last great house with its setting, original furnishings, and artwork intact. The house was voted the "best all-time work of American architecture" in a 1991 poll of members of the American Institute of Architects.

The natural beauty surrounding Fallingwater is intimately connected to our understanding and appreciation of the house itself. The genius is that the house is able to physically and spiritually embrace the natural worlds, capturing in architecture a vision of people engaged as an active part of the organic life of the landscape.

Echoing a natural pattern established by its rock ledges, Wright placed the house over the falls in a series of cantilevered concrete stone chimney mass quarried from the same local Pottsville sandstone as the rock ledges. Although the house rises more than 30 feet above the falls, strong horizontal lines and low ceilings help maintain the safe, sheltering effect Wright sought to achieve. To bring the natural environment into the house as well as to draw its inhabitants out, almost as much floor space is taken up by outdoor terraces as indoor rooms.

Quote by Wright..."Where the whole is [to] the part as the part is to the whole and where the nature of the materials, the nature of the purpose, the nature of the entire performance" are all equally important to the resulting building. Fallingwater's design created a home that is sheltering, but at the same time pulls nature into the home.

Background Information
Found at www.taliesinpreservation.org

Taliesin- is the source of the ideas, concept, theories and techniques applied to the structures that Frank Lloyd Wright designed. During Wright's childhood he absorbed the lessons of nature from the surrounding hills and fields. He learned that people are most content and happy when they live in harmony with nature rather than imposing their will upon it. He eventually came back to build his studio and home in the middle through the end of his career.

Background Information
Found at www.oprf.com

Oak Park Studio- This was the Wright family residence from 1889 to 1909. Wright began the construction of this house in 1889 shortly after his marriage to Catherine. The studio annex was completed in 1898.

Originally, the room at the front of the house on the second floor served as his drafting room, until the completion of the Studio Annex in 1898. In 1895, Wright added the two story polygonal Bay on the south side. In the first floor of this Bay, Wright built his inspired Dining Room. The windows of the Dining Room Bay were later modified when the house to the south of the Wright Home was built, blocking the flow of light into the Bay. The same year, Wright also added a two story extension to the east side of the house. Wright remodeled the main house into a rental unit in 1911, changing the layout significantly! A major restoration program by the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust has returned the Wright Home and Studio to the way it was in 1909.

Background of The Prairie School
Found in [The Encyclopedia of Chicago](#)

The ideas of designing a building such as the relevance of a building to nature and the landscape, the visual expression of natural materials, or the idea of abandoning small, boxy rooms in favor of a more open, integrated interior space. The ideas stemmed from the Arts and Crafts Movement and the obsession of some who wanted to create a new American architecture appropriate to the Midwest, but spread to other regions of America and around the world.

Lesson Plans for Fallingwater, 1935-1939 Frank Lloyd Wright [1867-1959]

Objective: To compare and contrast Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural design over his career from an apprentice with Chicago's Sullivan to the creation and evolution of his own Prairie Style, using the example of Fallingwater (late career), Taliesin (middle career), and his Oak Park Studio (beginning career).

(This lesson was designed to be used as a part of the Architecture unit of Illinois, Chicago, and Local History at Proviso East High School, Maywood Illinois; designer, Jessica Piemonte, Social Studies)

Guiding Question: How was Wright able to keep true to his Prairie Style, organic life of the landscape in these three examples of very different topography, geography, and urban/rural settings?

(Fallingwater is perched on the side of a mountain overlooking a waterfall in the Alleghany Mountains of Pennsylvania; Taliesin is located next to the Wisconsin River in the rolling hills of Spring Green, Wisconsin; and the Oak Park, Illinois studio is located in a suburb of Chicago's urban area that used to be the treeless plains.)

Performance Tasks/Activities:

- To understand how cantilevers are balanced, have each student set a pencil on the desk so that the point extends over the edge of desk. They should gradually push the pencil toward the edge of the desk so until it begins to fall. Then have the students put a weight on the eraser end of the pencil. How much further can they extend the pencil over the edge with the weight on one end?
- Have students study all three buildings. Have students point out and document various structural designs (balcony, terrace, horizontal pieces, vertical pieces, types of materials used etc.)
- Have students make a list to compare and contrast the three buildings (setting, look of structure, materials used, etc.). Are there more similarities or differences?
- Give examples of how each of the three buildings would still be considered "Prairie Style". Explain how Wright kept true to his "organic" beliefs in architecture?

Vocabulary:

Frank Lloyd Wright- architect that began his start as an apprentice to Louis Sullivan of Chicago. Developed his own sense of style that later became known as the Prairie Style. Wright had a long career with ups and downs. Today his designs are much appreciated and many examples can be found in Oak Park as well as other locations in Illinois.

Architecture-the profession of designing buildings, open areas, communities, and other artificial constructions and environments, usually with some regard to aesthetic effect.

Prairie Style-an architectural style of the late 19th to early 20th century largely from the mid-west. Buildings were usually marked by horizontal lines, flat roofs with broad overhanging eaves, windows grouped in horizontal bands, integration with the landscape, solid construction, craftsmanship, and discipline in the use of ornament.

Commission-a service charge or money made from a service or job completed

Residential-a private residence or home

Fallingwater-mountain home made for Edgar Kaufmann Sr. in Pennsylvania

Taliesin-Wright's residence and studio in Wisconsin beginning 1911

Oak Park Studio-Wright's residence and studio used from 1889-1909

Apprentice-a person who works for another in order to learn a trade

Organic Architecture-viewed as philosophy so Wright's designs could change in appearance yet be governed by uniform organizing principles. (Nature of the site, needs of the clients, nature of materials)

Fortuitous-happening or produced by chance; accidental; lucky; fortunate

Terrace-the flat roof of a house; an open platform, as projecting from the outside wall of an apartment; a large balcony

Topography-the detailed mapping or charting of the features of a relatively small area

Geography-the science dealing with climate, elevation, soil, vegetation, population, land use, etc.

Urban-living in a city or town

Rural-living in the country

Cantilever-any rigid construction extending horizontally well beyond its vertical support; support for balcony, terrace (pencil example)

Horizontal-right angle to the vertical; parallel to level ground; flat or level

Vertical-upright position