

Architectural Study of your neighbourhood

Summary

Students will survey their surrounding residential community and observe and discuss the architectural styles found in the neighborhood, listing typical construction features characteristic to the architectural style. Afterwards, students will sketch individual homes or architectural details.

Background

This activity can be part of a larger investigation, incorporating materials provided by your local historical society that introduces students to a broad sampling of historic structures found in the state. This Lesson Plan will encourage students to become "building detectives" by investigating the local built environment. They will learn to identify various structures and compare and contrast their functions, designs, building styles and materials.

Objectives

- Students will acquire essential vocabulary to describe their observations of the built environment.
- Students will be able to identify popular architectural elements and attribute them to architectural styles commonly found in residential neighborhoods.
- Students will gain skills in drawing residential structures.
- Students will understand that the built environment conveys unique information about community history.

Procedures

1. As you plan a walking tour for your class, first walk the neighborhood on your own, planning your itinerary and noting buildings that would be interesting for your students to see. Be sure to record the addresses of all the houses where you wish to stop, so that you can plot an efficient and engaging route. Choose a morning or afternoon tour when parents or grandparents are available to participate.
2. Introduce the "building detective" concept and tell students they will be learning more about their school neighborhood by investigating residential buildings in the area on an actual walking tour. Tell them that they will be working individually or in pairs. Brainstorm some common elements of residential neighborhoods (for example, a park with recreational equipment, apartment buildings, a library, a school, a cluster of shops or strip mall) and list them on the bulletin board.
3. Review your local historical resources and pass out photocopied style glossaries for each individual or pair of students. Explain to students that they will use their style

glossaries to find the common features characteristic of different residential architectural styles. Have extra sheets of unlined paper (for sketching), pencils, and clipboards for each student or pair of students.

4. Lead students to the buildings that you have already identified. Have students note key architectural elements that are listed on a worksheet (For example, the roof type, geometrical shapes seen, and features such as columns).
5. If time permits, ask them to rank the buildings, using student-generated criteria based on observation. Criteria could include features like most interesting entryway, most decorative windows, unusual building material/pattern, most creative lawn ornaments, etc.
6. Back in the classroom, ask students to compare the residences in this packet to the residences seen on the walking tour.
 - a. Did the students find any that looked similar?
 - b. Did students find a home that borrowed from more than one style?
 - c. Have students share their findings and discuss as a group.
7. Have students illustrate their favorite home from the walking tour and write a brief paragraph explaining their selections.
8. Give students time to finish their sketches using crayons, markers, or paints. Display the resulting drawings and paragraphs.

Enhancement

Have students, either working in pairs or independently, design their fantasy house. Begin by having a class discussion to generate a list of the ten most important features of a house. Have students design the interior as well as exterior of the home. Have each student or pair write a description of their fantasy home and present it to the class. Student writings and drawings can be incorporated into a student-designed classroom display or scanned into the computer as an online display.

Grades 4-6