

Frank Lloyd Wright  
Before & After Visit Activity Sheets  
Racine Heritage Museum

*Before Your Visit:*

1. Ask the question: what is an architect? Someone who designs a building and oversees their construction.
2. Ask students to do some research at home on Frank Lloyd Wright. Who was he? What were some of his most famous works? (possibly bring in pictures of these buildings — can easily be found on the internet or in the library)

*Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland, Wisconsin in 1867, just two years after the end of the Civil War and in the Middle of the Victorian Era. His mother, Anna, was a teacher and part of a large Welsh family who farmed the Wisconsin prairies. Frank's father, William Russell Cary Wright, was a music teacher, preacher and orator. When Frank Lloyd Wright was a child, they moved to Iowa, Rhode Island and Massachusetts ultimately returning to Wisconsin when he was ten years old. Frank Lloyd Wright's father left the family when he was a young man and Frank never saw his father again. FLW helped support the family by working in the fields of the family farm in the summer. Experiencing the glory of seeds sprouting, seed pods ripening and kernels of corn and wheat turning golden, the patterns of furrowed fields and the shapes of trees, the rolling prairie, the color of clay and much more of nature would influence his designs in later years. His mother and aunts started their own school known as Hillside Home School. FLW's mother had encouraged him to be an architect. His mother helped save money for FLW to attend the University of Wisconsin. He studied under an engineering professor as a "special" student, because there were no architecture classes offered at UW-Madison. When he was twenty-one years old, with just \$7.00 in his pocket, Frank moved to Chicago to study under working architects, eventually studying in the offices of Louis Sullivan. He was under contract with Mr. Sullivan to design homes for Mr. Sullivan's customers exclusively. When Mr. Sullivan discovered that FLW was doing some work outside of the arranged contract, Mr. Sullivan fired him. Wright returned to his beloved Wisconsin with rolling prairies and fresh air.*

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3. Introduce your students to some of Wright's innovations. After doing so, ask them to design a home using a solar method of heating, a new method of transportation (no cars) and new approaches to TV, computers, kitchen appliances, windows and other areas.
  - designed first complete air conditioning system
  - used method other than radiators, which were popular at that time, to heat
  - designed the revolving door
  - designed indirect lighting
  - designed the open plan with no attic or basement — the ranch house is a direct descendent of this design
  - thought of the carport
  - used new materials such as plate glass, plywood, reinforced concrete
  - designed hotels with multi-storied atriums
  - experimented with semi-circles, spirals and eclipses as his career progressed
  - designed not only the building but the furniture, light fixtures, fabrics, vases and more

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*After Your Visit:*

1. Make arrangements with your transportation service to drive past the Johnson Wax Administration Complex (1936), the Johnson Research Tower (1940s) or the Hardy House (1905, 1319 S Main Street) — all FLW's designs. Drive along the homes on College Avenue and contrast them with Wright's homes. Do these homes look outdated? Look for geometric shapes in these buildings and building materials color.
2. Ask your students to share their Museum activities with the class.
3. Have your students design their own logo. There were times when FLW did not have a number of commissions he had wanted or needed. During those years he spent time designing magazine covers and other graphic work. His logo is distinctive and recognized world wide. With inks, pens and appropriate materials, students should design their own distinctive logo.
4. Study the following terms that define parts of buildings and describe FLW's homes and architecture:
  - **balcony:** a platform that sticks out from a building
  - **organic:** an approach to architecture inspired by the working together of shapes, colors and patterns found in nature
  - **prairie:** patches of level or slightly hilly land surrounding the Mississippi River. Most prairies do not have any trees and are covered with wild grasses.
  - **symmetry:** a similar size, shape and pattern of shapes on either side of a straight line
  - **tower:** a part of a building that is much taller than it is wide

