

***Fallingwater***  
**Frank Lloyd Wright**

**Sixth Grade**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**ART PRESENTER PROGRAM**

1. Why is the house called Fallingwater?  
*(The house extends over a waterfall)*
  
2. Have students locate the balconies, the man on the lower balcony, a vertical column of stone, and a vertical area of glass windows.  
Ask which exterior materials on this house are natural and which are man-made.  
*(The stone is natural, and the concrete, glass, and metal are man-made.)*
  
3. Notice how the textures of these materials contrast with each other. Describe the textures of the different parts of the house.  
*(The glass is smooth and shiny and the rock is very rough. The concrete is gritty, but not as rough as the stone, nor as smooth as the glass.)*
  
4. How did Wright preserve the natural beauty of this site?  
*(He made the house blend into the natural landscape by echoing the shape of the cliff and boulders. He built a large portion of the house from rock quarried on site. He did not plant large expanses of lawn, bulldoze the site to make it level, or cut down many trees.)*
  
5. To understand how cantilevers are balanced, have each student set a pencil on the desk so that the point extends over the edge of the desk. They should gradually push the pencil toward the edge of the desk until it begins to fall. Then have them put a weight such as a book or their finger on the eraser end of the pencil. How much farther can they extend the pencil over the edge with the weight on one end? Ask the students what parts of Fallingwater are cantilevered. *(The horizontal balconies are cantilevered.)*  
  
What part of the building appears to create the weight to hold them in place? *(The vertical stone column fulfills this function.)*
  
6. Why might a city dweller enjoy this house? Imagine being on one of the balconies. What would you hear? *(A retreat in the country would be a change of scenery for those who live in a city. From the balcony you hear the sound of the waterfall.)*
  
7. The Kaufmanns wanted a vacation home on their land. Why was the location that Wright chose for the house a surprise to them? Where would most architects probably have located the house to take advantage of the natural waterfall? *(Most architects would locate the house to have a view of the waterfall instead of placing the house on top of it.)*

## Sixth Grade

### Frank Lloyd Wright *Fallingwater*

#### Background Reading

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959)  
Architect

Wright was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin. After college he became chief assistant to architect Louis Sullivan. He later founded his own firm and developed a style known as the Prairie School, which strove for “organic architecture” in designs for homes and commercial buildings.

His mother was a teacher, and his father was a preacher and musician. The family moved a lot. Wright liked to be outside and fell in love with the Wisconsin landscape he explored as a boy. While at college at the University of Wisconsin, he majored in civil engineering. As an intern he ended up assisting a famous architect with the construction of the Unity Chapel. That experience convinced Wright that he wanted to become an architect. He went to work as an apprentice for Louis Sullivan, who favored clean lines rather than the ornate. He developed a style known as organic architecture. It had horizontal emphasis and expansive, open interior spaces. This became known over the years as “Prairie School” buildings.

Wright became famous for his designs, mainly within the United States. By the mid-30's, approaching 70 years of age, he designed what was to become many of the greatest buildings of his life.

#### **Fallingwater Residence (Kaufmann House)**

Fallingwater was commissioned by Edgar J. Kaufmann, founder of a prominent Pittsburgh department store. The Kaufmanns liked to escape the city and retreat to their 60 acre woodlands in the Allegheny Mountains. By 1935 their country cabin was falling apart and Wright was asked to design them a new residence. Wright believed a country home should become part of the landscape. So he proposed to build the house of the side of the cliff. The waterfall would be invisible from the interior but wholly integrated into the plan, with a stairway from the living room giving direct access and the rush of falling water always echoing through the house. Fallingwater, a large, low structure hovering like a boulder over the falls, seems almost as much a part of nature as apart from it. Deeply recessed rooms, fieldstone interiors, and unusually low ceilings create the impression of a cave. Although firmly anchored in solid rock, the terrace platforms appear to defy gravity. Between terraces are rooms with glass walls—transparent boundaries between inside and out.

Fallingwater is now open to the public for tours.

## Frank Lloyd Wright

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### Extended Activities

#### Materials:

Base piece of paper—8 x 10, 11 x 14, or 12 x 24  
Off white or light brown construction paper \* white tissue paper  
Elmer's glue, \*glue sticks, or rubber cement.  
\*markers or watercolors (water dishes, brushes, paper towels)  
Scissors and crayons

Depending on size of base piece of paper, could determine size of rectangular pieces of construction paper. (precut construction paper into 7-9 pieces of varied widths/lengths)

Each student would receive 7-9 pieces to arrange an architectural design based on Frank Lloyd Wright's, *Falling Water*

Students can cut rectangles thinner, smaller and arrange the desired effect. Glue pieces.

Use markers to add brick structure (chimney, stone supports)  
Pencil in ideas of rocks, trees, and stream. Use markers to add color or/and crayons.