

LOOK UP! LOOK DOWN!

Learning about historic preservation with the
DC Preservation League



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GRAPHIC SCALE - FEET

CONJECTURAL RESTORATION, SOUTH SIDE OF THE 800 BLOCK, F STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C.
LE DROIT BUILDING AT LEFT. HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, MARKET SQUARE PROJECT, 1969. HARLEY J. MCKEE, FA.I.A., DELINEATOR

INTRODUCTION

Using the students' basic knowledge established by using the home, the school, and the blocks around the neighborhood, this program will encourage the students to have a broader experience in their neighborhood as a means of teaching value concepts about our world and community.

The specific objective is to stress the importance of every community and preserving its history, and to broaden the students' understanding of what that means. Students will identify items and places that matter to them and determine why it is important to learn about and preserve them.

There is no better way to understand this history than to discover the elements of our built environment, which includes anything produced by man using both natural and manmade materials. Buildings have much to tell us about people, history, lifestyle, culture, religion, construction methods, ethnic origins, commerce, economy, commerce and technology. They are very accessible historic artifacts that directly link the past and the present.



[Aerial view of Thomas Circle \(bottom left corner\) and Scott Circle \(center\), 1980. Source: Library of Congress, Carol Highsmith \(photographer\)](#)

LESSON ONE: OUR ENVIRONMENT

LESSON GOALS:

Increase awareness of students' community and learn responsibility for the environment.

Through these activities, students begin to recognize their shared built and natural environments and realize/understand its connection to their own lives and those of others who live in their community.

This recognition is the foundation for learning about the importance of not only caring for it now for one's own enjoyment but also, preserving it for future generations to enjoy just as they are doing today.

Questions for discussion:

- What does the word, **environment**, mean?
- What do we mean by **natural environment**?
- How is that different from the **built environment**?

Nature is a model for architectural forms and shapes. Climate and the natural environment influence design decisions. Architecture satisfies emotional and spiritual needs in addition to physical needs.

- Why are both important to our community?
- Why is it important when designing a building to consider the natural environment?
- What do we learn from having the structures, both old and new in our built environment?
- What do these structures tell us about the people who live in our neighborhood?

ACTIVITY A: LOOK UP! LOOK DOWN!

Students will embark upon a "field study" with the goal of taking students beyond what they know from their own experience to what is possible. Have students take a walk around the school grounds/neighborhood block.

1. **LOOK UP!** See how many elements of the natural environment students can find (tree, grass, flowers, clouds, etc.).
2. **LOOK DOWN!** Then ask them to look for those that are built or manmade (house, porch, street, sidewalk, fence, school, etc.).
3. **LOOK THROUGH!** Focus their attention.
4. **STAND ON YOUR HEAD** (or look between your legs upside down)! This offers a different perspective/point-of-view.

ACTIVITY B: SCAVENGER HUNT

Students will use a worksheet (*attached*) with pictures of items on the walk. They will circle what they see on their walk. Flowers, slide, baseball field, basketball court, bench, soccer field, fountain, garden, stop sign, crosswalk, lawn, street, curb, park, streetlight, driveway, pavement, swings, electric wires, playground, traffic light, road, trees, fence, rules, yard, fire hydrant, sidewalk, birds.

ACTIVITY C: PLAYGROUND RULES!

Discuss park and playground activities, uses and rules. Present a list of questions for discussion specific to the students:

- What activities take place?
- What elements are built into these environments to facilitate and encourage these activities?
- Who are parks and playgrounds for?
- What are the rules in parks and playgrounds?
- What could be added to this park for community use?
- What can we do to help care for our parks and playgrounds?

LESSON TWO: ARCHITECTURE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD/BACKYARD

WHAT IS “ARCHITECTURE”?

Architecture is a combination of art and construction. A building’s architectural style, like the personality of an individual, is its special look or design.

A building’s architectural style is a combination of its shape, age, building materials and ornamentation. Stylistic labels (i.e., Greek Revival or Craftsman) are a way to explain a building’s appearance. However, you don’t have to put a style label on every building. Some buildings are a mixture of several styles and some have no particular style.

Whether your community has log cabins, ornate mansions, farmhouses, barns and other outbuildings, commercial buildings, factories, places of worship or combinations of many types, you can learn more about the story of your place and its people from the buildings.

Buildings are as individual and interesting as are people. Like people, some buildings are small and delicate, some are tall and thin, and others are large and heavy looking. Both people and buildings have different features – small or large eyes (windows) and different shaped mouths and noses (doors and projections). Buildings, like people, have different colors, shapes and features (windows, doors, columns, foundations, decorations etc.).

The way people dress is another clue to understanding their personalities and the fashion of the times. Buildings can be fancy with lots of jewelry (ornamentation) or plain and neat looking. Thus, buildings, like people, are decorated differently, making some look grand and important and others plain and ordinary.

Form v. Function. Structures were built to meet the needs of the times (i.e., outside kitchen, plumbing, gardens, proximity to town)

ACTIVITY A: INTERESTING ARCHITECTURE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Slide show of significant or unique buildings (*attached*), structures and parks in DC and in their neighborhood. Ask children to look at each slide. Ask students to point out features on each building photograph.

- Do you like or dislike this style? Why?
- Would you like to live in a house in this style?
- What adjectives come to mind when you look at this style?
- Does this style remind you of something from another time period or culture that you have studied?

ACTIVITY B: ARCHITECTURAL GRAB BAG

Some historic buildings have fanciful decorative elements. Have student pull out real architectural details that have been used on buildings. Ask them to guess how they might be used in building design.

ACTIVITY C: A TOUCH OF FLAIR

Some historic buildings have fanciful decorative elements. Others may be quite simplistic.

Have students create their own decorative designs for buildings! Clip photos from catalogs and magazines or decorate (paint, color, glitter) and cut out worksheet shapes, add 3 dimensional decorative elements (using stickers, cereal, pasta, etc.) provided by the teacher.

ACTIVITY D: STORYTIME

National Trust for Historic Preservation- 10 Preservation Books for Children and Teens:
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-books-for-children-and-teens#.XoIscYhKi02>

ACTIVITY D: HOMEWORK: *MY HOUSE MATTERS WORKSHEET (Attached)*

Students will complete this worksheet with their parents at home. Information provided will serve as the basis for discussion in Week 3. If time allows, the worksheet may be started in class.

LESSON THREE: MY HOUSE!

LESSON GOAL:

What does my house look like? What is important to me? What does my environment say about who I am?

Houses and apartment buildings built in the same era often have similar features. Guide the children in a discussion about why certain periods have produced homes with different characteristics and why it is important to see these differences.

For example, you may find that some homes built 150 years ago have working shutters that open and close. Historically, they provided security, protection from weather, privacy and ventilation. In contrast, many homes built today have shutters that are immovable and attached to the house for purely decorative purposes. This is a design element carried over from older homes that can give a house a more traditional look even though technology now makes it unnecessary for the shutters to function as they once did.

ACTIVITY A: THAT'S ME!

Students participate in a stand-up/sit-down activity. Using the My House Matters worksheet questions, the teacher prompts students with statements. The students show that the statement is true or false about their own house by standing or remaining seated.

EXAMPLE: Teacher, looking at question 6, says, "My house has a chimney!" Students who have a home with a chimney stand up and say, "That's my house!" and then sit back down. Teacher then prompts, "My chimney is made from brick!" etc.

This activity can take as few or as many minutes as necessary to help children understand that their homes have commonalities and differences all of which are important in studying their house.

ACTIVITY B: STORYTIME

"The Little House" by Virginia Lee Burton (1943 Caldecott winner)

OR

National Trust for Historic Preservation- 10 Preservation Books for Children and Teens:
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-books-for-children-and-teens#.XolscYhKi02>

ACTIVITY C: INTERESTING ARCHITECTURE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

Slide show of houses in DC neighborhoods. Ask children to look at each slide. Ask students to point out features on each building photograph.

- Do you like or dislike this style? Why?
- Would you like to live in a house in this style?
- What adjectives come to mind when you look at this style?
- Does this style remind you of something from another time period or culture that you have studied?

ACTIVITY D: A TOUCH OF FLAIR (Continued)

Some historic buildings have fanciful decorative elements. Others may be quite simplistic.

Have students continue to create their own decorative designs for their building that they created in the previous lesson. Clip photos from catalogs and magazines or decorate (paint, color, glitter) and cut out worksheet shapes, add 3 dimensional decorative elements (using stickers, cereal, pasta, etc.) provided by the teacher.