



INTRODUCTION

Modern architecture is the term given to a large span of architecture history that ranged from the 1890s to the present. It has varied by country and culture, but is consistent in its determination to remove ornamentation and created a free expression of space. In this lesson, students will receive an introduction to modernism, including its inception to the present. Students will discover the various artistic and technological advancements that influenced the movement. As well as learn about the movement's most influential architects. With the help of the ARCHITECTURE 101 video, students will have a greater understanding of modernism to which launch a discussion on what modern architecture was and how it influences architecture today.

OBJECTIVES

- To learn about what political, technological and artistic events sparked the creation of modernism.
- To discover some of the influential architects of the movement.
- To learn about the attributes of modern architecture.
- To learn the influence of the Bauhaus in creating modernism

PROCEDURE

- 1) **GETTING STARTED:** At the start of the lesson, consider showing the contrast between the days before modernism and after. Show historic landmarks like the Louvre in Paris or the Capitol Building in Washington D.C., and contrast that with buildings like the Seagram Building in New York City or the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. Begin the discussion by showing the difference between the buildings. Point out the use of ornamentation on the older buildings versus the newer ones. Also point out the types of materials. The Louvre and Capitol are both made of stone, where as the newer ones are made of steel and glass. Ask students why they think this change in style occurred. Listen for answers like “new technology” or “changes in society.” Direct the conversation toward the rise of technology following the Industrial Revolution, including the mass production of steel and glass. Also mention the change in society following WWI—a desire to break from traditional, nationalist values, moving toward an international perspective. At the end of the this brief discussion, write “Modernism” on the board and mention that modern architecture was a radical departure from centuries of architectural thinking, and that the movement still impacting architecture today.
- 2) **WATCH:** Next, have the students view ARCHITECTURE 101 episode “What’s Modern Architecture?”

- 3) **DISCUSS:** After watching the video, have a classroom discussion asking your students about the video. Here are some sample questions to ask to guide the conversation:
- 1) Why are architects like Louis Sullivan and Antoni Gaudi both considered modernist architects?
 - 2) What was the purpose of modern architecture according to its early advocates?
 - 3) Why did modernism fall out of favor?
 - 4) Who were some of the most prominent architects of the modernist movement?
 - 5) What qualities do you see in modern architecture that is noticeable to you? Are there any buildings in your town or city that shares these qualities?
 - 6) What do you think about modern architecture? Does it feel hospitable or cold?
 - 7) How does modern architecture differ from the International Style?
 - 8) Do we still build buildings like the modernists? If so, name some examples.
- 4) **ACTIVITY:** To give some greater understanding on modernist architecture, have students do an activity where they design their own modernist house. This can be done with groups or individually. Have students start with a single sheet of paper and have them think of what are the principles of modern architecture (i.e. lack of ornamentation, open floor plans, and strong use of steel, glass, concrete). Next, have them use a T-square and triangle to draft up a schematic design. It is up to you on how detailed you would like. Display pictures of famous modernist houses like the Farnsworth House, LA Case Study Houses or the Esherick House. What is most important is that students see the process of designing a modernist space.
- 5) **DISCUSS PART II:** Ask the students to look at their plans and think about whether their houses are more like the International Style or the broader modernist style.

RELATED RESOURCES

Below are books we used in producing our episode on modernism, so feel free to do some extra research to inform your lesson.

Taschen, Laszlo, and Katja Gazey. *Modern Architecture*. Taschen, 2010.

Weston, Richard. *100 Ideas That Changed Architecture*. Laurence King Publishing, 2020.