

## Connecting Cultures in Architecture: Pre-Built Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan: High School

### Lesson Overview

Architecture can be a meaningful reflection of a society's history, values, and technology as well as its major influences. By studying a culture's built environments, we can learn a great deal about that culture.

### Lesson Objectives

- Consider the connections between cultural identity and architecture
- Examine how cultures may influence each other's design styles and approaches
- Create architectural designs to reflect your own values and cultural influences

### Materials, Resources, and Preparation

#### Teachers

- Relevant images and curricular materials are available at:
  - <https://humanities.nmartmuseum.org/collection/art-architecture/>
  - <http://sam.nmartmuseum.org/collections>

#### Students

- Internet or library access to research historic architectural styles and their associated cultures and time periods
- Art making materials. This lesson's project can be completed using traditional art media such as painting, drawing, or sculpture as well as digital design resources.

#### Getting Started:

Review the curricula on **Spanish Pueblo Architecture**, **Spanish Colonial Architecture**, **Territorial Architecture**, and **Ancestral Pueblo Architecture** to learn about New Mexico's signature architectural styles and the history and cultures that informed their creation.

#### Activity:

After learning about the ways that different cultures came together to produce blended architectural styles in New Mexico, such as Spanish Pueblo Revival or Territorial Revival, students will develop a unique architectural style of their own. Students will research and select two or more different architectural styles from different historical periods and from different locations. These styles should hold some sort of personal attraction for the students. Examples of different architectural styles found in New Mexico and around the world can be found in the New Mexico Museum of Art's collection:

<http://sam.nmartmuseum.org/collections>. Some examples are included below.

### Step #1:

Ask each student to select 2-4 styles of architecture that they have a positive response to. These connections can be as simple as remembering a building they liked from a film or recalling something from a textbook. Detailed knowledge of the style or place is not necessary. If class time allows, encourage students to research the architectural style, its history, and the culture that it comes from. If time does not allow for this kind of research, simply finding representative images will suffice.

### Step #2

For each architectural style students select, they will compile three short lists. These lists may be based on research done by the students while finding their reference images, but it may also be the result of a subjective analysis. Their impressions are perfectly valid for this step; however, students should clearly note if their lists are based on their personal impressions, on research, or a combination of the two.

The first list for students to compile is a list of cultural values reflected in the chosen architectural style. For example, in the Neoclassical architecture of Washington, D.C. students might note the connection to the idealized ancient Greeks and the desire to create a built environment that expressed greatness. Depending on the class, time available, and whether a long-form research project is required as part of the assignment, this list can be compiled in one of two ways. First, if appropriate, students can research the buildings they choose to find out what those building styles were intended to convey. Second, it's perfectly ok to ask students to carefully consider their own impressions of these buildings and list the values that they see in the designs.

In the second list, students will list the ways that their chosen architectural style relates to materials and technology. For example, Pueblo architecture utilized natural materials that were readily available and were adapted to different forms over time. International Style in contrast favored steel, glass, and concrete that were made more readily available through advances in technology.

In the third and final list, students will define the visual aesthetics and architectural elements associated with each style. Students should describe what the buildings look like in as much detail as possible. Are the edges and corners of the building angular or rounded? Does the building rely on specific color palettes? Are there decorative elements or shapes that recur in each example?

### Step #3

Using the information they have compiled in their three lists, students will design the exterior of a single building that incorporates the values, materials, aesthetics, and architectural elements of each of their chosen styles. If architects from the late Classic Maya and the Greek Revival periods came together to create one building, what would it look like? What values would it express? How would each culture be reflected in the construction? The final design can be completed in any media, including drawing, painting, sculpture, or 3D modeling. To complete the project, each student will present their final design to the class. If the students were required to research the historical style and culture of the buildings that served as inspiration, they should present their findings as part of the presentation. Each student will also need to highlight aspects of their hybrid design, note why they chose to include those elements, and expound on what personal value they found in them.

Lesson Conclusion & Reflection:

How each person reacts to a piece of visual culture, be it a painting or a building, can be a subjective experience that is informed by a variety of life experiences. How each student interprets and combines architectural styles is likely to be highly personal. If time allows, having those students who are willing share why they selected the styles they used and what they wanted to convey by combining them can be a great way to explore not only our cultural connections to architecture, but our personal connections as well.