

Build a HOME

Build a CAREER



SOCIAL STUDIES

Building on the Past



The Workforce Development Arm of the National Association of Home Builders
1201 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 (800) 795-7955 Ext. 8927

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The Lesson Booklet series:

- **Career Exploration**
- **English/Communications**
- **Math**
- **Science**
- **Social Studies**

Lessons are built around steps in the HOME BUILDING PROCESS

PLANNING AND DESIGN PHASE

- Development/Construction Management
- Financial Management
- House Design
- Site Selection
- Determine Materials/Costs
- Zoning/Permits
- Site Preparation

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

- Purchase Materials
- Laying Foundation
- Framing
- Electrical/Plumbing/HVAC Installation
- Insulation
- Flooring
- Roofing
- Window Installation
- Drywalling/Finishing and Tapers
- Select plumbing, electrical, cabinet fixtures and floor coverings
- Finishing—carpentry, painting, tiling
- Flooring installation
- External finishing

THE HOME INTERIOR

- Smart House Enhancements
- Interior Design

LANDSCAPING

HOME BUYING

- Financing/Closing

HOME SELLING (ongoing throughout process)

- Public Relations/Advertising
- Marketing and Sales

SOCIAL STUDIES

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SOCIAL STUDIES

Introduction

Social studies today covers a vast array of interrelated subject areas, encompassing people, cultures, environments, places, time, continuity and change.

Architecture and home design can provide a compelling context for presenting and positioning lessons, thus helping your students gain a broader, deeper understanding of these interrelationships.

At any point in time, anywhere in the world, the structure of a home, the materials used inside and out, and even the configuration and content of the rooms reveal something about the environment and geography, popular culture, the lifestyle and position of the inhabitants, their societal values and mores—even their type of government.

There are literally hundreds of ways to incorporate home architecture and design into social studies activities. Develop your own courses or try some of the lessons that begin on page 8. They were created by teachers who participated in the pilot site demonstration project conducted in Grain Valley, Missouri, Indianapolis and Tallahassee.

Here are some quick ideas to spark your imagination:

History/Urban Studies: Begin in your own backyard

- Have students research their neighborhoods from the perspective of housing styles, tracing the origin of the style and the economic, social and political factors that are linked to types of houses they are used to seeing every day.
- When was their house/building built? How does it reflect the political, economic and social era in which it was built? How does it reflect the adaptation of design elements from a different time period or culture?

American History: Explore the American melting pot through its builders

- The United States has a multitude of home styles and design features that were brought by different cultures. For example, Native American tribes developed housing that met their particular needs and fit the climate and topography of their regions; Scandinavians and Germans are credited with introducing the log cabin in the 1630s. Assign students an area or region of the United States. Ask them to determine what housing styles and home design ideas were introduced by different cultures, and how current housing styles have been adapted from their original form (Colonial, Spanish Mission, Log Cabins).
- Ask students to look at the décor of their homes for items that reflect their heritage or culture (have them ask parents and family members if they are not aware of any such items); they can also interview family members to learn about the family items that have special meaning. Ask them to prepare a brief report on the item, including what it says about their heritage, whether it is still commonly found in homes, and if it's used today as it was originally. It might be fun for students to find and bring in antiquated household items that will stump the class (such as a buttonhook used to fasten high-buttoned shoes or a thick 78-rpm record).

Environment/Natural Resources

- Use different building materials to launch an examination of the way geography and natural resources determine/define housing materials, and therefore, housing styles, e.g., sod, brick, logs, stone, wood. How have the depletion of natural resources, environmental issues and the evolution of building materials and technologies altered the way homes are built in your area? Your region? Other regions of the country?
- Apply the lesson above to the modern world. Select a country or region of a continent and explore the relationship of geography and natural resources to dwellings and life styles.

World History

There is a long history of migration and takeover throughout the world. Ask students to determine how integration of cultures, either through migration or takeover, affected the governmental and social structure, as well as the architecture and home design, of a country or region from the earliest time to today. Make a comparative timeline of political and military upheaval or evolution and the changes in dwelling patterns/architecture/home design.

Sociology/Cultural Anthropology

- Have students explore the relationship of social behavior to living conditions and dwelling patterns. Compare and contrast a small town, an urban neighborhood of single family dwellings, and high-rise apartment complexes. How do the definitions of neighbor, neighborhood, extended family or community differ in each case?
- Have students make these same comparisons/contrasts for developing nations. Ask students to compare/contrast the worst and best housing conditions in selected countries and create a table/presentation of relevant ethnic, social and economic statistics related to these living conditions. Have students analyze and draw conclusions to provide perspectives on societal structure and the impact of housing and housing upgrades.

Urban Studies/Civics/Current Events

- Have students explore current residential building issues such as zoning, environmental issues, and local safety concerns (building in earthquake-prone areas or near flood plains). How and why are they changing?
- How do these restrictions compare to restrictions in a different region (e.g., large urban area vs. rural wooded area)? What environmental, lifestyle, social or other factors affected the restrictions?

Be creative in translating these ideas into exciting, interactive lessons for your students.

- Suggest different ways students can present their findings: A skit or play, a puppet show, a three dimensional shadow box or diorama, a PowerPoint® presentation, murals or posters, an oral presentation or in-class panel discussions.
- Bring in the experts to talk, demonstrate and explain: Historians, local builders, cultural anthropologists, architects, long-time local residents or people of different cultures who can share stories of times past and life in different countries.

- Go out and explore: Tour the neighborhoods. Visit local historical sites, ethnic museums and shops.
- Surf the net for interactive historic tours you can take as a class activity.
- Check the History Channel or *Biography* on A&E for upcoming relevant programs you can tape and bring in as discussion starters.
- If you live in a large urban area, consider arranging a tour of historic or famous sites either by tour bus or boat, or a walking tour, to show students their world from a different perspective. You may be able to get a special rate, especially if it's off-season.

For additional activities that will engage your students, see the Science Lessons book, particularly the following lessons: *The Right Stuff: The Nature of Building*, *How Smart is Your Smart House?* (home automation), and *The Art and Science of Paint*.

LESSON 1

The Design Process: Meeting Life Style Needs

When an architect designs a home for a family, he or she applies technical as well as creative skills. A successful design will meet the specific needs and preferences of the homeowner and will reflect the design concepts and knowledge of the architect. This lesson shows students how an architect assesses the needs of clients and, in turn, designs an appropriate and pleasing environment for the family.

Preparation

- Obtain preliminary portfolio information from a professional builder or architect to use as an example in class and as background in preparing the lesson.
- Arrange for an architect or builder to help introduce and lead the lesson.
- Collect home magazines or find out where students can easily obtain them.

Procedure

- Ask students how they think architects/home developers determine various home styles and designs. Talk about the process of creating a family profile and designing a home to fit the needs of that family/client.
- Invite an architect or builder to the class to discuss the home design or remodeling process. Ask the architect to take students on a house tour, describing how that house was designed to fit a particular family's needs.

Make the trip a problem-solving adventure by asking students why they think a certain area or room was designed a certain way; have the architect describe a desired outcome and ask students what they think a design solution might be – before they see the house.

- Select several students to play “client” families or couples and give each client group a “story” that outlines or indicates some of the features they would want and need in a home. Assign student teams to be architects who must develop design ideas for these clients. The architects will not see the client stories. They must interview their clients to find the initial facts an architect needs to begin a family profile. Tell students to use the facts to prepare a rough sketch or detailed description of their design and the problems it solves or the needs it meets. If possible, have an architect at some of the brainstorm sessions to guide the process.
- Have students present their ideas to the class, then ask the client family to read its profile and explain if their needs were met by the design.

Team Teaching/Blended Instruction Opportunities

Art and Communications, Consumer Economics, Industrial Arts.

Activity Extension

Apply the design process activity to a history or cultural anthropology lesson. A student or student teams are “architects” designing dwellings for a family from another culture or time period. They should research their client’s living conditions, as well as available building materials and the state of technology (e.g., is indoor plumbing appropriate?) in order to develop a needs profile and create the best home design.

Support Materials/Resources

- Textbook: *Homes: Today and Tomorrow*, Ruth F. Sherwood
- Local architects and contractors
- Home design and remodeling magazines, especially those with articles about before and after solution-oriented design and remodeling work.

LESSON 2

Home, Home in the Ranch

This lesson introduces and examines familiar types of home styles, focusing on the relationship between form and function. Students will use critical thinking skills as they determine why particular styles of homes were popular at different times and how changing demographics, psychographics and economic/environmental conditions have brought changes in housing styles.

Preparation

- Research local housing styles.
- Collect/identify materials and information on local residential styles of architecture and their history. This can include videos, written material and exhibits at local museums/historical societies.
- Identify specific neighborhoods or historic districts for walking tours.
- Prepare a housing style list for students to investigate, concentrating on styles found locally. These might include ranch, raised ranch, patio or garden home, revised one story, story-and-a-half, split level, atrium split, California front-to-back, bungalow, Colonial, Queen Anne, Cape Cod. These may also include apartments, row houses, condos and townhouses.
- Contact a local real estate agent/local architecture historian who can talk about housing styles and trends.
- Collect copies of real estate guides, magazines and homes-for-sale booklets for each student (these can often be found free at grocery stores).
- Obtain disposable cameras.

Procedure

- Introduce the lesson by discussing the different looks and styles of homes. Have students describe their homes. Ask if they know what style their home is and when or why that style became popular. Talk about the factors that would determine housing styles in a particular area or a particular period in history. These should include the economic climate, the demographics (young couples starting families, ethnic groups migrating to the same area, etc.), climate, land availability, affordable/available building materials, etc.
- Ask students to read *Homes: Today and Tomorrow*, or similar book or magazines of housing styles, to become familiar with housing style terminology. Introduce the list you compiled and ask students to research their definitions and write brief histories.
- Show *The Wonderful World of Houses*, or a similar video that explains the function behind various house styles. After viewing the video, ask students to draw a web of styles and functions.
- Direct students to <http://www.ownhistory.net.styles.html> and <http://www.ohj.hw.net/magazine/> to chart house styles, the unique characteristics of distinct housing styles, and the materials unique to particular styles.
- Ask students to identify local housing styles using *House Styles at a Glance* by Maurie Van Buren and local/regional home/life style magazines.
- Supply a few disposable cameras so students can take house photos to identify and classify, using books and magazines as reference. You can even make this into a game-show-like class activity: "Name That Housing Style."
- Arrange a guided walking tour of a historic neighborhood or take a walk in your neighborhood and have students identify different styles of homes. Take pictures that you can use to produce reports on the different kinds of housing in your area. Tell students that reports should include the origin of that type of housing. Ask them to research the following: is a particular home related to a particular time period (e.g., Victorian) or built for/related to/influenced by a particular group or culture (e.g., stucco with tile roof built in the Spanish mission style); why/when was it practical/popular; why were certain materials used; what are the pluses and minuses of this style in terms of livability and general comfort.

Team Teaching/Blended Instruction Opportunities

Art History, Communication, Consumer Economics, Pre-Architecture.

Activity Extensions

- Assign student groups distinct housing styles that are common in your area. Instruct them to visit a building materials store or a local builder firm to learn about the construction requirements for their housing style. Then hold a class discussion comparing the requirements. Invite a builder or contractor to moderate the discussion.
- You can test students' understanding of housing styles with a quick team competition or beat-the-clock activity. Create bumper sticker-size cards with descriptions of 20 or more home styles. For each description, create a picture card showing that style. Affix circles of tape to the back of the cards so they will stay on the wall. Put up 5 or 6 sets at a time. Mix all the cards so pictures are not near their definitions. Invite teams to unscramble the pictures and correctly match them with definitions as a timed event. It should be less than a minute to be challenging.

Support Materials/Resources

- Textbook: *Homes: Today and Tomorrow*, by Ruth F. Sherwood
- Video: *The Wonderful World of Houses*, Barbara Lawrence Productions, Los Angeles, CA.
- <http://www.ohj.hw.net/magazine/>
- <http://www.ownhistory.net.styles.html>
- www.coolhouseplans.com
- www.ehouseplans.com
- Architects, real estate agents
- *The House Style Book*, Deyan Sudjic
- *Homes of our Own* Educational Program (video), National Association of Home Builders
- *House Styles at a Glance*, Maurie Van Buren
- Issues of local/regional home/lifestyle magazines

LESSON 3

Who Built Our Town?

Students will study the evolving architecture of their town, city or region as they learn about the different groups of people that built the housing at different periods, and how styles and standards have changed or have become incorporated into modern architecture.

Preparation

- Find a local historian or long-time residents who could talk to the class about the different people that settled your area and built homes.
- Take photos of different housing styles you will have students research and report on.

Procedure

- Talk about architecture in your area. Are there a number of different home styles from different decades/periods?
- Ask students to research a particular type of residential building and/or a group of people who settled in your area and influenced housing styles. Tell them to put together a display that incorporates a timeline, information about how the particular housing style is constructed and visuals that show neighborhoods of the past and present that feature that style of home. You can give them photos of homes to identify and research.
- Invite a panel of people who can talk about different groups who built homes at different times. The focus is on the type of home, how and why it was built and when it was built.

- Ask students to write a short report summarizing how building practices in your town/region have changed and how builders through time modified housing to adapt to the environment and meet the needs of their changing audiences.
- Arrange tours of neighborhoods or areas featuring different types of home styles. If possible, arrange for an architect or someone from a local historical society to accompany the tour.

Team Teaching/Blended Instruction Opportunities

Consumer Economics, English, Urban Planning, Industrial Arts.

Activity Extension

Assign students to find journals, diaries or newspaper and magazine stories that talk about daily life in your town during five or six different decades. What does the writing suggest about life styles and daily activities? Discuss how life and life styles changed and are changing now.

Support Materials/Resources

- *Homes: Today and Tomorrow*, by Ruth F. Sherwood
- *Early Architecture*, by Riley P. Jones
- Historical homes, ethnic museums in your area; web sites about your area's history and culture
- Local examples of architecture representing different time periods, and different populations

LESSON 4

Preserving Our Past

Preserving historic sites helps us and future generations understand and appreciate the rich blend of cultures that have created unique towns and cities across America. This lesson encourages students to become “docents” who can educate peers about local history.

Preparation

Identify one or more local historic sites or parks, historical society or ethnic museum that can serve as “learning laboratories.” Maybe the downtown or other district in your town is being restored; there may be an old homestead or building that has been restored and converted to a new use.

Procedure

- Have students (or student teams) select a historic subject to research from a list you have compiled.
- Tell them to use the library, internet and the site itself to gather information, pictures, slides, or even video so they can prepare an interesting documentary “tour” to present to the class. Their presentation should include written, oral and visual components. (Students should ask if they can take pictures or shoot video at the site).
- Tell students to take a formal tour of their site, if possible, or interview a guide or volunteer and take notes.
- Have students present a “virtual tour” of their site and encourage the class to ask questions as they would if they were taking a tour.

- Conduct a class discussion about the importance of preserving historical works of architecture, and how that relates to the building industry today. If possible, bring in a builder, a historian or an architect to help facilitate the discussion.

Team Teaching/Blended Instruction Opportunities

Art/Art History, Consumer Economics, English, Industrial Arts.

Activity Extensions

- Help interested students line up volunteer positions at a historic site or local history/ethnic museum to gain greater awareness of the fields of study in historic preservation. Ask them to prepare short reports for the class on their experiences.
- Have students research the earliest construction processes used by people in your area (Native Americans, early trappers or settlers), and compare those methods with housing construction today. What is similar? What early methods have been adapted and are still in use? What changes have taken place? Why? Student teams can work with an industrial arts class to actually build a demo model of a local early dwelling to accompany reports.

Support Materials/Resources

- Magazines and brochures from historic sites, state parks, etc.
- History/ethnic museums and societies in your area

LESSON 5

Paving the Way: Evolving Occupations

Students will explore the evolution/development of careers and occupations as they are shaped by changing techniques, discoveries and technologies. The focus will be on skills and craftsmanship related to homes and home building.

Preparation

Locate historical reference materials and web sites students can use to find out about the early careers in home building and related fields. You can choose to concentrate on one area of history such as Early American, or assign student teams to follow a building profession such as plumbing back to its very beginnings.

Ask the local HBA to assist you in researching the history of various home building professions; find members who can present historical information to the class.

Prepare for introductory discussions and assignments by bringing in a few starter descriptions students can work with.

Examples:

- In Colonial America, water pipes were made of bored-out logs. The traveling workmen who constructed these early water systems were called borers. Around the early 1800s, pipes were being made of iron. Why did this change come about; how did that change the type of workforce and craftspeople needed?
- Before electricity and electricians, homes and streets were illuminated with gas or oil lamps and lighting fixtures. What kinds of craftspeople and workers were involved in this early lighting industry? When and how did the “modern electrician” become a profession ?

Procedure

- Ask students to name four or five professions/occupations that would be involved in building or remodeling a home. Answers might include plumber, electrician, carpenter and painter. Talk about how those jobs may have changed in the past 10 or 20 years. Use of computers, new materials and tools, and changing buyer needs and interests are all factors that may have altered the way building professionals work.
- Invite building professionals to speak to the class about the variety of factors that have changed their specific occupations through the years.
- Ask students to think about the kinds of occupations and skills that would have been needed 50 years ago, 100 years ago or earlier. Ask them to imagine they are living in their town or city in the early 1800s. There is no electricity. How would their home be illuminated? Whose job(s) would it be to make and supply the lighting materials used?
- Divide students into eight teams of three or four students. Assign each student a building industry profession/occupation to research. You can ask teams to select a building-related occupation. Or, you can give each team an assignment starter, such as those listed under Preparation.
- Discuss when and where class presentations will be made. In addition to presenting to the class, students may be able to share their learning with other classes, with parents at an open house or special assembly, or even with the community at a local event or fair.
- Each presentation should teach the audience something they did not know.
- Tell students to be creative in the method they choose for presentation. If possible, encourage students to work with graphics arts or computer instructors to produce a digital or interactive product, a short video or a timeline-style mural. The objective is to present their information in a way that's engaging and interesting for the audience.
- Discuss the information that every presentation should cover. Key points to include are: a thorough description of the occupation, how/when it began, how/when it changed, whether it exists today, and what occupations/professions have replaced it.

Support Materials/Resources

- Local HBA as a resource for information and speakers
- Local historical museums and societies
- www.inventors.about.com (*Inventions for the Home* section of the site)
- Sites on the history of plumbing
- www.americanhistory.si.edu/lighting (Smithsonian National Museum of American History –Lighting a Revolution)

Content Standards

Social Studies

Students will:

- demonstrate proficiency in expressing knowledge of continuity and change in history.

Language Arts

Students will:

- participate in formal presentations and discussions of issues and ideas.
- use oral communication skills effectively in both formal and informal presentations.
- use listening skills effectively in both formal and informal conversations.

Process/SCANS/NCDS

- Demonstrate basic skills in reading, writing, verbal communication, speaking and listening.
- Demonstrate the ability to reason, create, make decisions, and solve problems.

Home Building Industry Careers

The Department of Labor has identified more than 100 occupations and careers associated with the residential construction industry, in eight major categories. Here are just a few that might be of particular interest to students who enjoy social studies/history:

EXECUTIVE, ADMINISTRATIVE & MANAGERIAL

- General Manager
- Personnel, Training and Labor Relations Manager
- Property and Real Estate Managers
- Personnel, Training and Labor Relations Specialists

PROFESSIONAL SPECIALTY

- Civil Engineers
- Architects
- Regional & Urban Planners
- Lawyers
- Teachers, Librarians & Counselors
- Interior Designers

TECHNICIANS & RELATED SUPPORT

- Legal Assistants & Paralegals
- Title Examiners & Searchers

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