



PART ONE: BUILDINGS, NEIGHBORHOODS & TOWNS

LESSON FOUR: HOW BUILDINGS ARE USED

By Charles M. Yarborough

Grade Levels

4 – 12 Teachers should adjust/select activities appropriate for the age and ability of their students.

Objectives

- Using historic buildings in your community, students will sharpen their powers of observation and develop research skills.
- Students will learn to become aware of their local environment and learn about various building types and uses.

Mississippi Curriculum Connections

- Mississippi Studies (4th grade) Framework – Competencies 1,3, & 5
- Mississippi Studies (9th grade) Framework – Competencies 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5

Materials Provided Online www.mississippiheritage.com

- List of Basic Building Types
- Adaptive Reuse
- Architecture Style Guide

For the Teacher

Our built environment consists of buildings with many different uses. It is important that students learn to identify general types of buildings and to distinguish their uses. This understanding will allow students to become involved in making local decisions regarding zoning and city/town planning, as well as advocating for the preservation of buildings.

Opening the Lesson

As discussed in Lesson One, when it comes to buildings, it can be safely said that most buildings are built with a fairly specific use in mind. These buildings may be beautiful, or they may be ugly. As long as they serve the function for which they were built, most people don't give much thought to the building itself. It is important that citizens be able to recognize different building types and their uses in order to be the most effective advocates for a positive built environment.

On the board, write the following question: "What types of buildings make up a town?" Working individually or in small groups, ask students to reflect seriously on this question and write as many answers as they can. Have students share their ideas with the rest of the class and generate a class list answering the question.

Using the *List of Basic Building Types* provided on www.mississippiheritage.com, introduce and discuss any building types which may not have been included in the class list, emphasizing that there is great diversity in the types of buildings that make up each Mississippi community.

Developing the Lesson

Building Types and Uses

Utilizing slides or online images of various buildings, have students guess the use of each building displayed. As they guess, have each student explain the details that suggest their guess (the "clues" the building gives them). For instance, large-scale columns might suggest a bank, university building or museum.

Keep a class list of the details that suggest each building type. Initially ask guiding questions to steer the students in the right direction. As the exercise continues, they'll catch on and less direction should be needed.

Students should be able to make general connections about types of buildings that allow them to be "classified" together. For instance, hospitals and schools have different uses, however, they both could be classified as "institutional" buildings. Houses and apartment buildings are both classified as "residential".

Teachers should also point out that some buildings contain two or more uses, such as apartments located over retail stores. These buildings are referred to as "mixed use" buildings.

CLASSIFICATION	EXAMPLE	CLUES
1. Residential	Homes Apartment buildings	Front yard, small windows, chimney, small door Numerous windows; curtains and lamps in windows; many doors
2. Commercial	Stores; Offices Restaurants	Display windows; signs
3. Industrial	Factories; Warehouses; etc.	Large buildings with large doors; small windows
4. Institutional	Hospital; School; Government Offices; etc.	Large building; many entrances
5. Monumental	Memorials; Museums; College/Universities; etc.	Ornate architectural detail; large scale; statues; landscaping; located away from other buildings
6. Recreational	Stadiums; Skating Rink; Arcades; etc.	Large parking lot; easy public access

Show slides or utilize online images to illustrate the different classifications highlighted in the table below. Have students identify common architectural elements like those listed, adding to the lists as they can.

Working in small groups, have students develop a list of building needs scenarios to include the following details: building use; number of people regularly using the building; the distinct natural environment; and the area surrounding the building.

Have students describe the type of building they would construct to meet the needs of their scenario. They should answer specific questions such as:

- What will the building be made out of?
- What would surround the building?
- How many rooms would the building have?
- How many windows would the building have?
- What types of rooms would the building need?

Students should draw a picture that describes the building in the context they've identified and present their "dream building" to the rest of the class.

Using the *Architecture Style Guide* provided on www.mississippiheritage.com, have students group architectural details corresponding to various building types. Students can compare their lists. Discuss the reasons that some details are prevalent in certain types of buildings while absent from others.

Adaptive Reuse

Old buildings often outlive their original purposes. Adaptive reuse occurs when a building is adapted for new uses while retaining its historic features. An old factory may become an apartment building, a historic church may find new life as a restaurant or a commercial building may become a church.

Using the examples in the *Adaptive Reuse* materials provided on www.mississippiheritage.com, ask students to guess at reasons for the adaptive reuse of buildings. Create a class list. Reasons may include preservation of a community's history/culture, cost effectiveness, environmental concerns and others.

Recently, Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, spoke on the need to save historic buildings to help save the environment. As one writer summarized from Moe's speech, "It makes no sense to recycle newsprint and bottles and aluminum cans while we're throwing away entire buildings, or even entire neighborhoods."

Have students read all or part of Moe's speech (available at http://www.nationaltrust.org/news/2007/20071213_scully.html). Discuss his major points. Then for homework, have students, working individually or in small groups, identify a building in the community they feel would be a prime candidate for adaptive reuse. What new use(s) would they propose for the building? Why?

Have students develop a report or class presentation advocating their suggested new use for the building.



Assessing Student Learning

Teachers may develop assessment opportunities in addition to the following:

- Students should learn the basic vocabulary of building types.
- Students should learn the basic building categories and the architectural details associated with each category.
- Students should present their “dream building” to the class.
- Students should complete a report/presentation on the adaptive reuse of a building in their community.
- Students should participate in various classroom discussions.

Extending the Lesson

The possibilities for extending the lesson are limited only by the desire, time and creativity of the teacher and students. Some possible extensions include:

- Take students on a field trip to a neighborhood which illustrates a variety of building types evident in your community. Have students sketch examples of building types discussed in class. Students could compete to see who can identify the largest number of building types most quickly.
- Students could create photographic collages of examples of building types found in the area surrounding the school or in various parts of the community.
- Students could prepare a lesson/presentation on each building type, explaining the details which indicate the type.

- Invite a city planner, architect or structural engineer to visit the class to explain some of the important differences between various building types.
- Have students explore the National Trust Sustainability Initiative website (<http://www.nationaltrust.org/green/index.html>) and the Whole Building Design Guide: Sustainable Historic Preservation website (http://www.wbdg.org/resources/sustainable_hp.php) and write a report or develop a class presentation explaining the role of historic preservation in sustainable development. Be sure to utilize the *News, Research, and Case Studies* pages on the National Trust site for this assignment.

Curriculum Developed by

Mississippi Heritage Trust

PHYSICAL: 600 East Amite Street, Suite 201
Jackson, MS 39201

MAILING: P.O. Box 577, Jackson, MS 39205

PHONE: 601-354-0200

FAX: 601-354-0220

EMAIL: info@mississippiheritage.com

ONLINE: www.mississippiheritage.com

Author: Charles M. Yarborough

As a native Mississippian, Charles M. Yarborough has long been an advocate for educating young people about the history and architecture of our state. A teacher at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science since 1995, Charles regularly involves his students in preservation activities, including the performance project *Tales from the Crypt*, which was awarded the 2005 Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts, and an architecture scavenger hunt of historic Columbus. Charles was named History Teacher of the Year for Mississippi in 2007.

