

Process Paper

I knew that I wanted to choose a topic that related to Wisconsin. I also wanted to feel passionate about the subject. Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture met both of these requirements. I had been interested in Wright since I first visited the Robie House years ago. I loved its clean lines and how I felt when I was inside. I knew that Wright had revolutionized architecture, but as I began my research I did not know whether that revolution had an impact on history.

I started researching my topic by finding sources on Frank Lloyd Wright in the library. I also toured the American System-Home, Model B1, and the Jacobs House. I discovered that the Prairie School design was born from a reaction against European architecture. I also discovered that Alfred Levitt, one of the creators of Levittown in the 1950s, had studied Wright's work and incorporated his ideas into the ranch home that became one of Levittown's most popular designs. This surprising connection led me to further study ranch houses in the 1950s. In order to understand the historical significance of the design, I thought about how the features that Wright had created, especially the open concept, had affected the people that lived in those homes. I understood that the ranch design had met the desires of people in the 1950s, but I then realized that living every day in an open environment would change people. As I have continued to do research since the southeastern Wisconsin regional competition, I found that a few of my ideas needed to be revised, but most were confirmed. In my interview with Sandra Rinomato, the nationally syndicated HGTV host, I confirmed that Wright's "destruction of the box" has remained popular, as most Americans still love the open concept home today. When I interviewed Eric Lloyd Wright, the grandson of Frank Lloyd Wright and an architect himself, I was able to confirm my hypothesis that Wright's most enduring influences on the ranch home were the open concept and the connection to nature through the use of large windows and natural materials. As I thought more about the historical significance of my topic and read more about the popularity of the ranch, I realized that it was a truly American architecture that unified our culture following World War II.

I chose the website category because I have a passion for technology. The website category also allowed me to choose multi-media that I felt would help me express my argument better. For example, I used clips from TV shows in the 1960s to show how relationships between people had changed. I also included a clip that allows the viewer to experience Wright's use of space inside a home.

My topic relates to this year's theme because Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School initiated a design revolution in reaction to European architecture. That design, reformed by architects and developers into the ranch home, changed history by unifying American culture through a single architectural design.

Word Count: 499