



ARCHITECTURAL GRAB BAG

Objective

Students will develop an understanding of the qualities of architectural materials through the senses of touch and sight, while using a descriptive vocabulary.

Architectural Items

- Brick
- Ceiling Tin
- Crown molding
- Doorknob
- Escutcheon plate
- Hinge
- Marble piece
- Spindle/Stair railing piece
- Tongue and Groove wood
- Wood siding

Procedure

Ask students to take turns reaching into the bag to choose one item. Before pulling the item out of the bag, ask students to describe how the item feels (texture, weight, size) to the class. Students can take turns guessing what the object is. After each item is removed from the bag, discuss the function of each object. Explanations of the items are attached to the sheet. Teachers may add any additional items to the bag.

Discussion Questions

- Why are certain materials used in specific places? What qualities of the material make it appropriate for its location? (windows let in light, roof tiles repel water)
- What would be an inappropriate location for these materials?
- What are some natural building materials? What are some synthetic (man-made) building materials?

Curriculum Developed By

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Explanation of Architectural Materials

Brick: Bricks have been used for thousands of years as a building material. In the past, bricks were handmade by mixing clay, sand and water and shaping it into blocks and letting it dry in the sun. Today, most bricks are made in factories and fired in kilns to “bake” them. Do you have many brick buildings in your neighborhood?



Ceiling tin: Ceiling tins are decorative pieces of tin that are usually found on kitchen ceilings or on ceilings found in commercial buildings.

Crown Molding: This piece of wood trim is placed between the wall and the ceiling for decoration. There are different styles of crown molding. Some classical forms are called egg and dart, acanthus leaf, and Greek key. In many historic homes, crown moldings were made out of plaster. Today, crown moldings are made out of wood or fiberglass.



Doorknob: This doorknob is made of glass and metal. What are most doorknobs made of today? How is this doorknob different from the ones in your house? Many modern doorknobs have a lock in the knob and are made of metal.

Escutcheon plate: A protective piece that surrounds the keyhole and door handle of a door. Do you think it is pretty? Do your doors at home have escutcheon plates?

Hinge: A moveable joint used to attach, support and open a door. While the technology of hinges hasn't changed much, the style has. This hinge has a ball on top of the pin. How does this hinge compare to the hinge on your classroom door?

Marble piece: In the 1800s and early 1900s, marble was commonly found in upper middle-class houses. Marble was used in entryways and around fireplaces. Is there any marble in your house, church or school? Today, real marble is considered a luxury building material.

Spindle/Stair Rail piece: A wood spindle is used as a decorative piece on the exterior of houses in the gables or on a porch between columns in repetition forming a frieze. Long spindles, called balusters, are the protective barrier that runs up the side of a staircase. Stairways in historic houses were usually made of wood and were often very decorative.)

Tongue and Groove wood: Tongue and groove joints allow two flat pieces to be joined strongly together to make a single flat surface. Before plywood became common, tongue and groove boards were also used for sheathing buildings, cabinetry, and to construct concrete formwork. This method is still used in good quality flooring.



Wood siding vs. Vinyl siding: Siding is the outer covering of a house meant to shed water and protect from the effects of weather. Additionally, the siding on a building is a key element in the aesthetic beauty of the structure--a feature that directly impacts the property value. Historically, wood was the most common exterior siding used and was normally installed as boards overlapping one another to form clapboard or lap siding. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, owners installed vinyl siding which manufacturers promoted as maintenance free. Unfortunately, that was proven false. What kind of siding is on your house?

