Historic Iowa Architecture

**Activity Overview:** Iowans have built and lived in many different types of houses over the years. From Victorian mansions to ranch homes, that state showcases a variety of architectural features. This Innovative Iowans activity highlights the design of two important and picturesque Iowa homes and invites you to explore architecture in your own neighborhood.

**Connection to Iowa History**
The house made famous in the *American Gothic* painting by Grant Wood was built in the Carpenter Gothic style, which first became popular in the 1840s. The painting was created by Iowan Grant Wood. Wood was born in Anamosa, Iowa, on February 13, 1891, and later grew up in Cedar Rapids. His most famous painting, *American Gothic*, was exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1930 and won immediate acclaim. He also taught painting at the University of Iowa's School of Art from 1934 to 1941.

Terrace Hill is considered one of the finest examples of Victorian Second Empire architecture in the United States. The home was built by Iowa's first millionaire, Benjamin Franklin Allen, and cost around $250,000 to build. Frederick Marion Hubbell purchased the home and his family lived at Terrace Hill until 1957. Terrace Hill became the home of the Iowa governor when Governor Robert Ray moved into the home with his family in 1976.

**What is an architectural feature?**
How do we know these homes were built in this particular style? Buildings have architectural features, which could also be described as special details and parts of a building that fit a certain style. These features can be the roof style, how the windows are designed, types of moldings or any other style details that make the building unique. American Gothic House is simple in design but features a grand window. Terrace Hill is a fancy home made of brick and many decorations and details.

**Instructions (Video Instructions Available)**
1. **Create**. Draw the place where you live on the worksheet.
2. **Match**. Read and match the architectural features of American Gothic house and Terrace Hill.
3. **Explore**. Find the listed architectural features in your own neighborhood.
4. **Share!** If you would like to share your drawing with the State Historical Museum of Iowa, please email your design to museum.education@iowa.gov.
5. **Questions to Spark Learning**
   - Think about the unique architectural features of your home. What makes those features unique?
   - Does your home have any of the features of the American Gothic House or Terrace Hill? If so, which ones?
6. **Additional Resources**
   Explore these resources below to learn more about historic architecture in Iowa.
   - *The Goldfinch: Regionalist Art and Literature*
   - Iowa Architectural Foundation
   - State Historical Preservation Office Resources

**Materials**
- Pen or pencil
- Worksheet
Below are descriptions of architectural features to use with this activity. You will utilize these terms to draw the building that you live in and identify the architectural features on the American Gothic House and Terrace Hill.

- **Balcony**: A platform enclosed by railings usually found on upper floors of buildings.
- **Balustrade**: A decorative railing found on porches or balconies.
- **Board and batten siding**: Type of outdoor wall covering with small vertical strips of wood.
- **Brick chimney**: Usually found in older homes, this tall brick structure allows smoke to escape.
- **Brick Walls**: Outdoor walls built of stacked brick.
- **Corbel**: A fancy piece of material used to support a structure from below. These are typically found on trim pieces and along rooflines.
- **Dormer Windows**: A window that is located within the roof.
- **Double hung windows**: A window with an upper and lower panel of glass which can be opened.
- **Foundation**: The lowest part of a building.
- **Gable roof**: Roof with two sloping sides that come together at a peak.
- **Mansard Roof**: A roof style that is sloped on each of its sides.
- **Metal roof**: A covering for the roof made of metal and usually shiny.
- **Pointed-arch window**: A fancy window based on church window design.
- **Porch**: A covered structure found on the front or side of a building.
- **Porch column**: An upright pillar that supports a structure or roof.
- **Quoining**: A stone or brick decoratively stacked along the corner of a structure.
- **Screen door**: A hinged door typically outside of a front door with metal screening to allow air flow.
- **Slate Roof**: A covering for the roof made of slate tiles.
- **Tower**: A tall, multi-level structure.
- **Wooden shingle roof**: A covering for the roof made of wooden shingles.
- **Wrap-around porch**: A covered structure found on the front side of a building.

**Draw a Side**
First, observe the house or building that you call home. Using the space below, draw one side of the structure that you find most interesting. Once you've finished your drawing, label any architectural features (see above).
This photograph of the American Gothic House shows the many different architectural features that identify this home in the Carpenter Gothic style. Explore the photo, review the different architectural features and match the number of the feature from the word bank to the photo below.

**Architectural Features Word Bank**

1. Pointed-arch window
2. Wrap-around porch
3. Porch column
4. Metal roof
5. Wooden shingle roof
6. Brick chimney
7. Foundation
8. Double-hung windows
9. Gable roof
10. Screen door
11. Board and batten siding
Architectural Features of the Terrace Hill

This photograph of Terrace Hill shows the many different architectural features that identify this home in the Victorian Second Empire style. Explore the photo, review the different architectural features and match the number of the features from the word bank to the photo below.

Architectural Features Word Bank

Now it’s time to explore your own town and neighborhood with this Goldie’s architecture scavenger hunt. Try and find these architectural features on the houses and buildings in your community. Once an item listed below is found, check off the box.

If you can’t find some items, no problem. Just skip or exchange the item for another special feature that you find.

Good luck and happy hunting!

- **Column**
  - An upright pillar that supports a structure.

- **Double-Hung Window**
  - A window with an upper and lower panel of glass, which can be opened.

- **Shutters**
  - A panel that is typically found on the outside of a window for decoration or protection.

- **Railings**
  - A type of barrier typically used on stairs and porches.

- **Brick Chimney**
  - Usually found in older homes, this tall brick structure allows smoke to escape.

- **Board and Batten Siding**
  - Type of outdoor covering with small vertical strips of wood.

- **Screen Door**
  - A hinged door typically outside of a front door with metal screening to allow air flow.

- **Gable Roof**
  - Roof with two sloping sides that come together at a peak.

- **Porch**
  - A covered structure found on the front side of a building.