

Wright and Nature

Over the past half a century, many have erroneously agreed that there is a chasm in Frank Lloyd Wright's work, an unbridgeable gap between his residential and commercial buildings. In fact, all of his architectural designs show off his belief in a world governed by technology but indebted to nature, and all his buildings are really monuments to man's place in the natural world.

In his domestic homes, Wright seems to emphasize a blending of the artificial and the natural, with an emphasis on low-pitched roofs, asymmetry, natural light, and hidden entrances that would require a visitor to search for a way in. These obscured entrances also make the visitor confront the landscape in a way he or she would not have to if he or she entered merely from the urban street the house would be located on (in the case of houses such as the Winslow House in Illinois and other suburban houses). In his own house at Taliesien, in Wisconsin, the visitor must travel a winding driveway uphill to the back of the house and literally confront a panoramic vista of green hills and woods, rather than merely entering the house. In this way, then, one is forced to acknowledge both the artificial and the natural at once and cannot merely observe the home as one thing alone.

In his commercial buildings, too, there exists a great deal of nature's influence. Though the spaces are more straightforward than the domestic spaces (entrances are not hidden, for instance), as their functions necessitated, Wright's commercial buildings still showcase the marriage of nature and technology. The Larkin Building, for instance, lets in an unprecedented amount of natural light for an office building. Wright intentionally eliminated darkness wherever possible, even encapsulating the central space with a giant skylight, creating the effect of working outdoors. Still more clearly connected to nature is Wright's Price Tower in Oklahoma. The cantilevered skyscraper, though the home of an oil and chemical pipeline company, was designed to look like a giant tree, thus blending in with the surroundings so that, at least from a great distance, it would look just like another tree. Obviously, the building is so tall up close that the effect is somewhat lost, but the attempt to use technology to recreate nature is still impressive. If nothing else, designs such as these demonstrate that Wright's residential and commercial designs had more in common with each other than originally thought.



1) The author's main purpose in writing this passage is to

- A. refute the opinion of most architectural critics that Frank Lloyd Wright put more effort into his residential projects than he did in his commercial projects
- B. prove that Frank Lloyd Wright celebrated technology in both his commercial and residential projects
- C. analyze several viewpoints about nature's influence in Frank Lloyd Wright's works
- D. disprove a common belief about two types of Frank Lloyd Wright's work
- E. challenge the belief that only some of Frank Lloyd Wright's designs celebrate nature

- 2) As used in paragraph 1, the word **chasm** most nearly means
- A. a divide
 - B. an abyss
 - C. an analysis
 - D. an opinion
 - E. a design
- 3) According to the passage, the central difference between Frank Lloyd Wright's residential and commercial buildings is that
- A. the residential buildings were not usually on city streets
 - B. the commercial buildings had hidden entrances
 - C. the residential buildings let in less natural light
 - D. the commercial buildings have less connection to nature
 - E. the residential buildings are less straightforward
- 4) It can be inferred from paragraph 3 that Frank Lloyd Wright believed
- A. a commercial space should look as professional as possible
 - B. all domestic homes should be monuments to nature
 - C. a building's function should influence its form
 - D. technology would never be able to stand out from nature
 - E. most office buildings did not allow in enough light
- 5) According to the passage, which of the following is true about the Price Tower?
- A. It blends into the tree-line when seen up close.
 - B. It housed a company that supplied oil.
 - C. It was built in Oklahoma.
 - D. Its design was inspired by its function as an office building.
 - E. All of the above are true.
- 6) Which aspects of Wright's architecture do you admire? Which do you dislike? Would you like to live in a house or work in a building designed by Wright? Why or why not? Discuss.

Answers and Explanations

1) D

Question Type: Reasoning

In the first paragraph, the author writes, “many have...agreed that there is...an unbridgeable gap between [Frank Lloyd Wright’s] residential and commercial buildings.” This lets us know there is a common belief about two types of Frank Lloyd Wright’s work. Next, the author writes, “in fact, all of his architectural designs show off his belief in a world governed by technology but indebted to nature.” The phrase, “in fact,” lets us know that the author will try to disprove this common belief. In paragraph 2, the author tries to disprove this belief by referencing Wright’s domestic homes. In paragraph 3, the author tries to disprove this belief by referencing Wright’s commercial buildings. Using this information, we can tell that the author’s main purpose in writing this passage is to disprove a common belief about two types of Frank Lloyd Wright’s work. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

In this passage, the author spends an equal amount of time commenting on Frank Lloyd Wright’s residential and commercial projects. The author equally points out some highlights of both types of projects. This lets us know that the author’s main purpose is not to refute the opinion of most architectural critics that Frank Lloyd Wright put more effort into his residential projects than he did in his commercial projects. This means **(A)** is incorrect.

At the end of the first paragraph, the author writes, “In fact, all of his architectural designs show off his belief in a world governed by technology but indebted to nature, and all his buildings are really monuments to man’s place in the natural world.” From this, we can tell that Frank Lloyd Wright felt that technology was indebted to nature, and therefore nature should be celebrated. This lets us know that the author’s main purpose in writing this passage is not to prove that Frank Lloyd Wright celebrated technology in both his commercial and residential projects. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect.

The author never mentions any other viewpoints about influences on Frank Lloyd Wright’s work. Because the writer only gives his or her viewpoint, we can tell that the author’s main purpose in writing this passage is not to analyze several viewpoints about nature’s influence on Frank Lloyd Wright’s work. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

The author writes about how in the design of Frank Lloyd Wright’s domestic buildings and “... his commercial buildings, too, there exists a great deal of nature’s influence.” This lets us know that the author’s main purpose in writing this passage is not to challenge the belief that only some of Frank Lloyd Wright’s designs celebrate nature. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

2) A

Question Type: Vocabulary

chasm (*noun*): a pronounced difference, gap, or divide between people, viewpoints, or feelings.

In the first paragraph, the author writes, “Over the past half a century, many have erroneously agreed that there is a chasm in Frank Lloyd Wright’s work...” We can use context clues—hints from known words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase—to help us figure out what the word

chasm most nearly means. The second part of this sentence reads, "...an unbridgeable gap between his residential and commercial buildings." Because the comma that separates these two quotations lets us know that the second part explains something about the first, we can tell that the "chasm in Frank Lloyd Wright's work" is also an "unbridgeable gap." Since a gap and a divide are synonymous, as used in paragraph 1, the word chasm most nearly means a divide. This means **(A)** is correct.

Using the above information, we can tell that a chasm is a gap or a divide between two things. An abyss is a deep hole. A gap or divide might be created by an abyss, but many other things can also create divides. Because an abyss is not the same thing as a gap, we can tell that the word chasm does not most nearly mean an abyss. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect.

Using the above information, we can tell that a chasm is a gap or a divide between two things. An analysis is an interpretation, not a gap or a divide, so we can tell that the word chasm does not most nearly mean an analysis. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

Using the above information, we can tell that a chasm is a gap or a divide between two things. Because an opinion is a thought or statement that relays a preference, we can tell that it is not the same thing as a gap or a divide. This lets us know that the word chasm does not most nearly mean an opinion. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

Using the above information, we can tell that a chasm is a gap or a divide between two things. Because a design is a plan, we can tell that it is not the same thing as a gap or a divide. This lets us know that the word chasm does not most nearly mean a design, and **(E)** is incorrect.

3) E

Question Type: Reasoning

In paragraph 3, the author writes, "In his commercial buildings...the spaces are more straightforward than the domestic spaces." Using this information, we can infer that if the commercial spaces are more straightforward than the domestic spaces, or residential buildings, then a central difference between Frank Lloyd Wright's residential and commercial buildings is that the residential buildings are less straightforward. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, **(C)**, or **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

4) C

Question Type: Reasoning

In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Though the spaces are more straightforward than the domestic spaces (entrances are not hidden, for instance), as their functions necessitated..." At the end of this quotation, the author implies that the function of a commercial space necessitates a different type of form; in this case, the necessity for more obvious entrances. Using this information, from paragraph 3, it can be inferred that Frank Lloyd Wright believed that a building's function should influence its form. This lets us know that **(C)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, **(D)**, or **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

5) C

Question Type: Research

In paragraph 3, the author writes, “Still more clearly connected to nature is Wright's Price Tower in Oklahoma.” Since the Price Tower is in Oklahoma, we can tell it was built in the same state. This means **(C)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, **(D)**, or **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.