

Photo Description



This picture shows tall metal arches that curve up and over like giant rainbows. The shiny silver arches are part of a sculpture in front of buildings with palm trees. The arches look smooth and reflect light from the sky.

Scientific Phenomena

The Anchoring Phenomenon is the structural stability and force distribution of curved arch structures. The metal arches maintain their shape and support their own weight through the physics of compression forces. When weight pushes down on an arch, the curved shape redirects those forces outward and downward to the ground, making arches incredibly strong and stable structures that can span large distances without collapsing.

Core Science Concepts

1. Forces and Motion: The arches demonstrate how forces (like gravity pulling down) can be redirected through curved shapes to create stable structures.
2. Materials and Properties: The metal material has specific properties like strength, flexibility, and durability that make it suitable for outdoor sculptures and architectural elements.
3. Engineering Design: The arch shape is an engineering solution that distributes weight evenly, allowing the structure to span wide spaces without breaking.
4. Patterns in Nature and Design: Arch shapes appear in both natural formations (like rock arches) and human-made structures because this shape efficiently handles forces.

Pedagogical Tip:

Use physical demonstrations with blocks or play dough to show how straight structures fall down easily, but curved arch shapes stay standing when weight is applied.

UDL Suggestions:

Provide tactile experiences by having students build their own arches with clay or blocks, allowing kinesthetic learners to feel how the curved shape distributes forces differently than straight structures.

Zoom In / Zoom Out

Zoom In: At the molecular level, the metal atoms are arranged in crystal structures that give the material its strength. When forces are applied, these atomic bonds resist breaking and help transfer the force through the entire structure.

Zoom Out: This arch design connects to larger engineering systems found in bridges, doorways, and buildings worldwide. Ancient civilizations used arch principles to build structures that still stand today, and modern engineers continue using these same force-distribution principles in skyscrapers and bridges.

Discussion Questions

1. "What would happen if we tried to build these arches using straight pieces instead of curved ones?" (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
2. "How do you think the curved shape helps the arches stay standing?" (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
3. "Where else have you seen arch shapes in buildings or nature?" (Bloom's: Apply | DOK: 2)
4. "What materials would work best for building an arch and why?" (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)

Potential Student Misconceptions

1. Misconception: "The arches stay up because they're heavy."
Reality: The arches stay up because of their curved shape that redirects forces, not because of their weight.
2. Misconception: "Only straight supports can hold things up."
Reality: Curved structures like arches can actually be stronger than straight supports because they spread forces over a wider area.
3. Misconception: "The metal will break easily because it's thin."
Reality: The arch shape makes even thin materials very strong by distributing forces efficiently.

Cross-Curricular Ideas

1. Math - Measurement and Geometry: Have students measure the heights and widths of classroom objects and draw their own arch designs on graph paper. They can count how many "arch blocks" it would take to build a structure like the ones in the photo, connecting to addition and skip-counting skills.
2. ELA - Descriptive Writing: Ask students to write or dictate descriptions of the arches using sensory words (shiny, smooth, tall, curved). Create a class book titled "Structures Around Our Town" where students describe and illustrate different arches and curved structures they observe in their community.
3. Art - Sculpture and Design: Have students create 3D arch sculptures using clay, pipe cleaners, or recyclable materials. They can paint their creations with metallic colors to match the shiny appearance of the arches in the photo, exploring how artists and engineers work together.
4. Social Studies - Community Helpers: Invite a local architect, engineer, or construction worker to visit the classroom and explain how they design buildings and structures. Students can learn that people in their community use science and design to create the structures around them.

STEM Career Connection

1. Structural Engineer: A structural engineer designs and plans buildings, bridges, and other structures to make sure they are safe and strong. They use math and science to figure out the best shapes and materials to use so buildings don't fall down. Structural engineers work with arches and curves just like in this photo! Average Salary: \$88,000 per year

2. Architect: An architect is an artist and scientist who designs what buildings will look like and how they will work. They decide the shapes, colors, and materials for structures and make sure they are both beautiful and safe. Architects often use arch shapes in their designs. Average Salary: \$82,000 per year

3. Construction Worker: Construction workers build the structures that architects and engineers design. They use tools and materials to put pieces together and make sure everything is built correctly and safely. Construction workers help build the arches and structures we see in our communities. Average Salary: \$48,000 per year

NGSS Connections

Performance Expectation: 2-ETS1-1 - Ask questions, make observations, and gather information about a situation people want to change to define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool.

Disciplinary Core Ideas:

- 2-ETS1.A - Defining and Delimiting Engineering Problems
- K-2-ETS1.B - Developing Possible Solutions

Crosscutting Concepts:

- Structure and Function
- Patterns

Science Vocabulary

- * Arch: A curved structure that spans an opening and supports weight above it.
- * Force: A push or pull that can change how objects move or stay in place.
- * Structure: Something that is built to support weight or serve a purpose.
- * Material: The substance something is made from, like metal, wood, or stone.
- * Support: To hold something up so it doesn't fall down.
- * Compress: To squeeze or push together with force.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- "Arches to Zigzags: An Architecture ABC" by Michael J. Crosbie
- "Bridges!" by Gail Gibbons
- "The Three Little Pigs: An Architectural Tale" by Steven Guarnaccia