



ICNY
Interfaith Center of New York



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

UNION

Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Building a 3-D Model House of Worship

Shai Afsai, Esek Hopkins Middle School, Providence, RI

Amy Bowton-Meade, Billings Middle School, Seattle, WA

Abstract:

This curriculum project describes a culminating assessment activity in which students create a three-dimensional model of a house of worship in a specific religious tradition.

We are teachers of middle school students engaged in a yearlong study of World Religions. Our courses ask students to explore, analyze, and experience various aspects of diverse religions. This includes taking students to houses of worship, speaking with members of faith communities, and exploring the idea of “lived religion.”

Students in our courses begin by exploring what religion is, and the many ways humans think about spirituality, religious ideas, conceptions of God, and the sacred. They explore ethical and psychological perspectives on religious life, and learn about five or more major religious traditions.

While studying diverse religions, our students research “exemplars” (typical or excellent examples) of houses of worship in each specific tradition. Through online or library research, site visits, and practitioner interviews, students will be equipped to create a three-dimensional model of a house of worship that will serve as a culminating assessment activity for the year.

By creating their model, students will see the variety of sacred spaces within a specific tradition, while also drawing out commonalities within this diversity.

Guiding or Essential Questions

How does a particular faith tradition shape or influence a sacred space?

How does the sacred space shape or influence a practitioner's faith or experience of the divine?

What is the relationship between form and function?

What are the important features typically included in this space?

What are the symbols used in this faith tradition? Where are they typically located?

What kinds of art, architecture, lighting, or design are typically part of this faith tradition?

Learning Goals

Students will:

- Research a wide variety of sacred space examples within a faith tradition
- Explore and identify what common components and attributes are present in sacred spaces of a faith tradition
- Consider what makes this space function as a mosque or a church or a synagogue or a temple (ie. is there an essential quality or "mosqueness," "churchness," "synagogueness" or "templeness" that can be identified?)
- Demonstrate their understanding of how sacred space and faith interact and intersect
- Create a 3-D model of a sacred space using materials provided by the school (cardboard, paper, recyclables, glue, scissors, paint etc.)
- Write a short explanation of their model and of how it is representative of the faith tradition
- Present their model to the class while addressing at least one of the essential questions
- Reflect on what they learned and what challenges they overcame (self-assessment)

Materials Needed

- Computer access for research
- Other research materials like textbooks, photographs, or interview Q&A
- Building materials such as cardboard, paper, recyclables, glue, scissors, paint, etc.
- Base template (box?) that is 2' x 2' so that students understand sizing

Implementation

Part 1 - In the last weeks of the year or as a culminating activity to show understanding, students will work alone or with a partner to research sacred space in a faith tradition. The goal of the research is to see a variety of examples or exemplars, identifying key components for the sacred space (e.g., Altar? Windows? Lighting? Seating? Symbols? etc.) Students will research using books, websites, videos or photographs. Students may also interview a practitioner or faith leader to gain information about choices made by specific houses of worship.

Part 2 - Students will design and build a replica of a house of worship with materials provided by the school. Students will use a cardboard base (2' x 2') and include at least five key components for their model. Students will choose among the offered materials and build all aspects of this model.

Part 3 - Students will share their model with the class, explaining the key features of their design and answering at least one of the essential questions posed (see above for list of possible essential questions. Note that some of the essential questions are more complex than others which helps with differentiation.)

Online Resources

The following links are examples of online resources for exploring the architectural design of houses of worship in five major faith traditions. These are not exhaustive lists, but they give a sense of available resources.

JUDAISM / SYNAGOGUE

1. [Inside the Synagogue: What do you need to know? - BBC Teach](#)
2. [Internal features of a synagogue - Worship in the synagogue - GCSE Religious Studies Revision - WJEC - BBC Bitesize](#)
3. [Section 3: Inside the Synagogue | The Life of the Synagogue \(cofc.edu\)](#)
4. [synagogue - Students | Britannica Kids | Homework Help](#)
5. [15 Synagogue Facts Every Jew Should Know - Mitzvahs & Traditions \(chabad.org\)](#)
6. [Places of Worship - Judaism \(reonline.org.uk\)](#)
7. [Places of Worship Orthodox Synagogue Tour - YouTube](#)
8. [Judaism: Sacred Spaces and Places | URI](#)
9. [Synagogues360 | \(anumuseum.org.il\)](#)

HINDUISM / TEMPLE OR MANDIR

1. [Places of Worship \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://reonline.org.uk)
2. [Places of Worship - Hinduism \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://reonline.org.uk)
3. [Inside: The Mandir – Heart of Hinduism \(iskconeducationalservices.org\)](https://iskconeducationalservices.org)
4. [Hinduism: Sacred Spaces and Places | URI](#)
5. [Places of worship - Practices in Hinduism - GCSE Religious Studies Revision](#)
6. [Hindu temples \(video\) | Hinduism | Khan Academy](#)
7. [The Hindu Place of Worship – Multifaith Education Australia](#)
8. [Hindu Temples and Places of Worship \(hinduwebsite.com\)](https://hinduwebsite.com)
9. [Hinduism: Understanding Image and Temple Worship - YouTube](#)

BUDDHISM / TEMPLE AND OTHER SACRED SITES

1. [Places of Worship - Buddhism \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://reonline.org.uk)
2. [Buddhism: Sacred Spaces and Places | URI](#)
3. [Buddhist places of worship - Worship - GCSE Religious Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize](#)
4. [The Buddhist Place of Worship – Multifaith Education Australia](#)
5. [Buddhism - Sacred Space \(patheos.com\)](https://patheos.com)
6. [20 beautiful Buddhist temples around the world \(nationalgeographic.com\)](https://nationalgeographic.com)
7. [Where do Buddhists worship? - YouTube](#)

CHRISTIANITY / CHURCH AND CATHEDRAL

1. [Places of Worship \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://reonline.org.uk)
2. [Christianity: Sacred Spaces and Places | URI](#)
3. [Places of Worship - Christianity - Baptist \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://reonline.org.uk)
4. [Places of Worship - Christianity - Orthodox \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://reonline.org.uk)
5. [The Christian Place of Worship – Multifaith Education Australia](#)
6. [Features of churches - The Church - GCSE Religious Studies Revision](#)
7. [Inside the Church: What do you need to know? - BBC Teach](#)
8. [Church Architecture Terminologies - Owlcation](#)
9. [Come & See: A Catholic Church - YouTube](#)

ISLAM / MOSQUE

1. [The Mosque | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](https://www.metmuseum.org)
2. [Inside the Mosque: What do you need to know? - BBC Teach](https://www.bbc.com/teach/religion/islam/inside-the-mosque)
3. [mosque | Parts, Features, Architecture, & Information | Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/technology/mosque)
4. [Introduction to mosque architecture – Smarthistory](https://www.smarthistory.com/introduction-to-mosque-architecture)
5. [Common types of mosque architecture \(article\) | Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.com/religion/islam/a/common-types-of-mosque-architecture/a/common-types-of-mosque-architecture/article)
6. [Virtual Historic Mosques - 3D Virtual Tours \(3dmekanlar.com\)](https://www.3dmekanlar.com/virtual-historic-mosques-3d-virtual-tours)
7. [Places of Worship \(reonline.org.uk\)](https://www.reonline.org.uk/places-of-worship)
8. [Islam: Sacred Spaces and Places | URI](https://www.uri.edu/library/digitalcommons/islam)

Assessment (also see rubric below)

Students will be given the assessment rubric at the beginning of this project. Students will first self-assess their model and then teachers will assess their completed model.

Reflection (also see questions below)

Students will be asked to reflect on their learning through a written component addressing specific questions. Student reflection will include questions about what was challenging to them and what they learned. This written reflection will also be shared with the class for additional depth and development of learning.

Extension Options

Students throughout this project may extend their research or their learning by exploring more of the resources, digging deeper into the faith tradition and/or creating more of a detailed model of a religious house of worship.

Rubric - Model of House of Worship**Name(s):**

	Honors	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
Structure	Model is well constructed and high quality. Student goes beyond the basics to include extra features and artistic details	Model is well constructed and attention is paid to quality and completeness.	Model has some good features but may be missing some components or seems unfinished	Model is incomplete or attention was not paid to the instructions.
Components	All five key components are present. Student goes above and beyond to add detail and artistic flair.	Model has five key components for the house of worship.	One or more of the key components is missing or is not of high quality.	Some key components are missing
Written Explanation	Written paragraph explains the project. Paragraph is well-edited, reflecting a depth of understanding. Requirements are exceeded.	Written paragraph explains the project. Paragraph is well-edited, reflecting an understanding of the faith tradition.	Written project may be somewhat choppy or may have benefitted from additional revision. Requirements are only basically met.	Written project may be disjointed or appear hastily assembled. Requirements may be incomplete.
Comments and Feedback				

Student Reflection

Name:

1. What was the biggest challenge you had in doing background research?
2. What was the biggest challenge you faced in building your model?
3. What did you learn about how a religious space contributes to the experience for the practitioners?
4. What did you learn about yourself as a learner?

For information about the Religious Worlds of New York summer institute for teachers, and more resources to enrich your teaching on religious diversity, visit www.religiousworldsnyc.org.