

The Courtauld

If Buildings Could Talk

↑ Ali Qapu Palace, circa 1610, Iran

↑ National Gallery, 1975, United States

The Courtauld Institute's Conway Library archive is home to almost 1 million photographs of architecture from around the world, of all periods up to the present day. The contents of the Conway are incredibly varied and range from everyday houses and homes, to fortresses, castles, temples and palaces!

The selected photographs in this activity are a wonderful starting point for creative writing activities.

Choose one image for each writing activity.

1. Another Planet: Write a Mission Report

Imagine you are an interstellar explorer, on a mission to discover a new planet. When you land on the planet this building is the first thing you see. Compile a report about your mission, stating what you have found. Be as descriptive as you can. You could even compile a video or audio report, to send back to mission control.

- What words would you use to describe this building?
- Does this building remind you of anything you may have seen before?
- What do you think this building is used for? Can you see any clues to what the purpose of the building might be?
- What does it tell you about the people/beings who live there or those who use it?

↑ Castle, 14th Century, France

↑ Villa Savoye, 1928-1929, France

2. Lost in the Woods: Adventure Stories

You find yourself lost in the woods, you stumble into a clearing and the only thing you see for miles is this building. Use one image and these questions as a starting point for a story and think about what might happen next. Your story could be spooky, or you might prefer to write something uplifting and magical. You could then use your story to create a comic strip or graphic novel with illustrations.

- Think about how you might feel when you see this building. Would you be scared, excited?
- What do you think this building might be? Could it be someone's home?
- Would you go inside of this building? If yes, what would find inside?
- Do you think that there are people inside of this building? If yes, what are they doing?

↑ Werkbund Housing Estate, 1930-1932, Austria

↑ Bagras Castle, 12th and 13th Century, Turkey

3. A Day in the Life: Writing a Journal

Imagine you live in this building and you are writing a journal entry for one specific day. Try to include as much detail as you can. You can break the day down into 1 or 2 hour chunks if you like.

- Think about what kind of person you might be?
- Perhaps you are a superhero and this is your secret lair?
- Perhaps you are a wicked sorcerer and this is your haunted castle?
- What was the first thing you did when you woke up? What did you do next?

You could add illustrations and floor plans to your diary to show what your home looks like on the inside.

Images:

All images courtesy of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art CC BY NC 4.0

1. Ali Qapu Palace (Ali Gapu Palace; emarat-e Ali Qapu), Circa 1610, Isfahan, Esfahan province, Iran
2. Pei, I.M., National Gallery, Wings (building divisions), 1975, Washington, District of Columbia, United States
3. Castle, 14th Century, Sully-Sur Loire, Loiret, France
4. Le Corbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret), Villa Savoye, Façade, 1928 - 1930, Poissy, Yvelines, France, Photographer Tim Benton
5. Lurçat, André , Werkbundsiedlung (Werkbund Housing Estate), House, 1930-1932, Vienna, Austria, Photographer Tim Benton
6. Bagras Castle, 12th and 13th Century, Bagras, Turkey