

## **From House To Home**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

When I decided to apply for this seminar, I did it because I have always been interested in dwellings and in decorating and remodeling houses, and because I thought that it was a wonderful opportunity for me to learn about Houston history, urbanism, buildings, and architecture.

There are some other reasons related to my work at school: when teaching social studies, I have had some difficulties in finding good materials. There are some packages for teaching social studies, but many of them are difficult to use and/or too hard for children to understand. The knowledge that I obtained in this Seminar will help me to fill this void and allow me to create my own materials to assist me in teaching this area.

I have chosen the title “From House to Home” for the unit because I believe that our living places are more than just somewhere for us to live. They also give us some of their own characteristics, and take from us some of our personality traits. Houses sometimes have more personality and importance than their occupants, and occasionally seem to rule their occupants’ lives and mark their destinies.

I consider the home as a “living being” that can influence, in an important way, the manners of the people who live inside. A family life can be different depending on the house the family lives in: some spaces can facilitate and improve relationships and the affective ties among the members of a family, while others can disturb and even destroy these links.

Therefore, choosing, maintaining, preserving, and “understanding” the house where one lives, and transforming it into a home, can be a matter of extreme importance. The places where we live are “presentation cards.” They tell others many things about our personalities, our likes, and our dislikes, and they reveal to the people who see them the way we understand life.

I will use this unit to make my students aware of the importance of the home for everyone and to show them the evolution of homes through time. I will also teach the importance of technology in our lives, making them reflect on how technology facilitates our work, our rest, and our leisure. I will have them discuss some of the most relevant inventions that affect us, and they will read the biographies of some important figures in science, art, technology and society in general.

I think that this unit can cover one month of activities in social studies and serve as a learning center for other curricular activities. However, depending on the interests of the children and the school, it can be done in a shorter or longer period of time. As a matter of fact, one of the principal characteristics of the unit will be its flexibility, which will allow it to be adapted to any school and any level.

## **PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

Teaching has been my avocation from my childhood, even before it became my profession. Both of my parents were teachers, and I helped them tutor other students. I always said that I was also going to become a teacher one day. I did not know how complicated this profession would be in my own days, but I already knew that a teacher is a model. As teachers, we have to be aware that teachers touch many people's lives: they are like mirrors in which thousands of students are going to find their own reflections throughout the years.

My interest in houses also comes from this period of my life. It seemed to me that it would be very difficult to one day become the owner of property, and I looked at my future with a feeling of uncertainty regarding my job, my economic position and my stability. I admired the beautiful houses of rich people, the wonderful "pazos" (palaces) that you can find in my country. I also read magazines about houses and dreamed of one day buying an old house and remodeling it into a nice, modern place.

This seminar attracted me from the first time I knew about it. The idea of learning about American houses was completely new and unknown to me, and it was exciting. The idea of working in a prestigious university, combining two of my interests – teaching and housing – and serving at the same time as my professional development, also excited me. I knew that it would be very challenging work, but I decided to face up to it.

I was born in a mountainous rural community in Galicia, in Northwest Spain, in an area full of small farms, each separated from the others. The landscape was (and still is) wonderful, full of forests and streams, but the access was difficult, and the climate was humid and cold in winter. These conditions, and its great distance from big cities and industrial places, preserved it from modernization and created a special climate where time had no importance and everything elapsed without change year after year, generation after generation.

The houses in Galicia were built in slate stone, with strong walls four or five feet thick. The construction technique was basically the same one used by ancient settlers 3000 years ago. They carefully piled the stones without putting any cement between them. It is the shape of the stones and the way they were placed that allowed the walls to last centuries.

One can still see the ramparts of Lugo, more than 2000 years old, with a perimeter of eight kilometers, or the multiple *castros*, (fortified villages on the top of a hill), even older than that. In these villages or *castros* people used to live in circular houses with a unique room and a straw-made roof, named *pallozas* (the word *palla* means “straw” in Galician). This construction technique was used for a long time and is still in use today. Many houses are centuries old, and in modern times, people seek them out to have as secondary residences. They buy and renovate old houses and therefore obtain wonderful secondary homes in the countryside, combining the solid and well-constructed building with the comforts of modern technology and furniture, all without the disadvantage of having to do farm work or the necessity of sharing the house with the livestock.

Ranches in Texas experienced a similar process, and were transformed from country houses into modern and luxurious residences. The romantic vision that we have today of these ranches does not correspond to the hard-working places that they used to be.

Galician farms usually had two floors. On the first floor, the livestock shared the place with human beings. Every day, the owners would put a new layer of straw over the dirty layer, and the animals’ body heat plus the heat coming from the fermentation of successive layers of straw helped a lot in the raw nights of winter. The kitchen was also located on this floor, and it consisted of a fire made directly on the ground, with big iron pots hanging by chains from the ceiling. There they cooked food for people and also for their animals. It also helped a lot as a heating system during the long nights of winter. On this floor, the ground consisted of packed earth or slate stones, and the furniture was rustic simple, made of wood with simple tools by the owners themselves.

The second floor was built over strong oak girders nailed with rustic boards. There was usually one big room for single women, another for single men, another for the couple of the house, and a big dining room that was only used on feast days when all the family met together to celebrate. There also was a pantry where the family stored the smoked and salted pig meat and chorizo as well as the cheese they had made. These products, with fruits and vegetables they picked from their fields, were the basis of their nourishment.

There was neither running water nor electricity in the houses. Inhabitants obtained water from wells or streams, and they got light from oil lamps. There were no doctors, and children were born at home with the help of an experienced midwife. A person’s entire life was joined to the family house, and many of them never made trips very far from their homes. This was the only world they knew.

People remained tied to their houses, and it was common for several sons or daughters to get married and continue working at home with their new families. To build a new home took plenty of time and money, neither of which they had. It also required land, which was expensive and difficult to get. To escape from these ties, there were not many

options other than migration to Argentina, New York, Cuba, or Venezuela, because in other Spanish cities there were not many jobs for them.

On these isolated farms, families worked alone, sometimes without seeing anybody else during the week. Only on Sundays, when they all went to church, could they meet briefly with their neighbors. So, everybody wanted to go to mass because it was an important event that nobody would miss, and they went happily to the parish, talking for a while to the neighbors. Sunday mass accomplished, in this way, an important social role, because it allowed people to learn of news from the community. Most of the news was about marriages, deaths, departures from the country, or letters from friends or relatives who had migrated to Argentina or Venezuela, shown proudly by the bearers.

In harvest time, though, things changed, and neighbors worked collectively because one family alone could not manage the work. They collected hay for the winter and grew wheat to make bread, but the fields were small, and the terrain did not allow for work with farming equipment, only for carts pulled by cows. So they collected the wheat by sickle and piled it next to a home, and they organized groups to do these jobs during the days of the short summers, before the rains came.

Another group activity was the construction of a home for a new couple. Many people would help them to do it without receiving any money, but an opportunity to return the favor would come, sooner or later. In these events, when many families worked together, they had many opportunities to make friends, court one another, or plan new collective activities.

In these isolated and rural communities, people worked very hard; made their own clothes from sheep's wool and flax that they grew; treated and knitted themselves; and mended their clothes again and again. Their mattresses and pillows were primarily made of wool, but also of straw, horses mane, or even pig's hair. They wore clogs made by themselves of wood. There was no money other than little amounts they got from the calves, eggs, cheese, or butter that they sold in the fair once a month. Life was not that different from how it had been in the Middle Ages.

But I remember that life was happy: The work kept people busy all year long. The food was good, sometimes even abundant, because they produced everything they needed. The long winter evenings around the fireplace created a sense of family that is difficult to find in our day, and people graciously devoted years or even their entire lives of work to the house. This feeling of belonging and cooperative work, and some idea that the family house should prevail over individual interest, marked people in some way and helped them to face quotidian problems.

Both of my parents were the sole teachers in this rural community in the Galician mountains. Everybody respected them because they had worked there as the only teachers for fifty years, helping the community to grow, develop, and progress. Today, in

any of these houses, there is at least one professional, because my parents insisted that only study could help them to leave poverty.

The school was a one-floor rectangular building, collectively constructed by 16 families, because the government would send teachers to rural areas only if the communities constructed their own school. The walls were made of slate stones, the same as the other houses, and all the divisions were made of pine boards. Half of the building was a residence for teachers, and the other half was the school. It was divided into two large rooms: one classroom for girls, and one for boys. My mother taught girls, and my father taught boys. When students finished the work, they had a recess and left directly to the country. All the boys and girls played soccer together with a cloth-made ball, hide-and-seek, and other games. There was no playground, there was no equipment, there were no fences, only nature and places to run everywhere, and I remember that we did a lot of exercise and had a wonderful time.

There's a thing that I can't forget: during the recess, every student received a big glass of milk and a sandwich. We had big cardboard barrels with powdered milk, and big boxes with white butter and others with orange cheese. I did not speak a single word of English at that time, but we could read and understand that it was a gift from American people, and I clearly remember written on the boxes: "American cheddar cheese, pasteurized process," because we repeated these words as a chant. These supplies were part of the Marshall Plan, which was the first help that Spain received to recover from the isolation it suffered after the Spanish Civil War, which preceded the Second World War.

With this gift, some money that my father got from the PIO (Equal Opportunities Foundation), and some bags of potatoes or pork meat that the children's families brought, more than 70 people were able to eat lunch every day.

To reach this goal, my mother got up at four o'clock in the morning to prepare the meal; taught classes; distributed lunch with the help of my father; taught again; and when we finished school, she took a tin with dirty clothes and went to the stream with her seven children in a row behind her, chanting the multiplication table, the list of minor prophets, the books of the Bible, the rivers of Africa, or the list of gothic kings. After finishing the wash, she got the tin with wet clothes over her head, her seven children in a row, and walked up the hill chanting the volcanoes of South America or the affluent rivers of the Mississippi River.

My parents did this without any other help. No other person worked at school. Cooking, sweeping, washing dishes, scrubbing the board floor, and of course teaching—everything was done by my mother, with the help of my father. Every one of their seven children went to University and became professionals. Many of their students did the same. My mother was well rewarded for her job.

Since the school we lived in was owned by the sixteen families who built it, my father bought 1/16 from one owner, then another portion, and many years later, he had the whole possession of the house except for 2/16s that were from one man that migrated to Buenos Aires and one lady who migrated to Cuba.

When we moved to a big city, a rich man wanted to buy the house to transform it into a pig farm. My parents were interested, but all of my six brothers and sisters and myself weren't, and we convinced our parents to buy the 2/16s that remained. It was hard to find the owners and get the papers, but eventually we did it. We also convinced our parents to remodel the school and convert the house into a home; now it is actually a nice place where we spend part of summer time and where all my brothers and sisters, with their respective families, meet once a year on the day of the parish feast: July 25<sup>th</sup>, Saint Jacques, Patron Saint of Galicia and Spain.

Professionally, I have been teaching since 1970. I always wanted to help people just like my parents did, so I always looked for places with special difficulty: I was concerned about migrant people, who are less favored by fortune: they have poor resources; they do not speak the language of their new country; they haven't got the needed educational background that could help them; they have not the infrastructure to protect themselves; they have the worst and hardest jobs; and they are sometimes ignored, marginalized, and abused; but they are brave and eager to rise and gain a position in the new country.

So I went to France, sent by the Spanish government to teach the Spanish immigrants' children for six years. Lessons were held in parishes, in civic buildings, or in hired places. Children came to learn Spanish after attending the French classes, sacrificing their free time instead of resting or playing, but they didn't want to get disconnected from Spain and from their parents due to linguistic problems. They also thought about facilitating their return to Spain. I taught levels from Pre-K to High School, and I even taught adult people who could not read.

I also taught in Colombia for fourteen years at the "Centro Cultural y Educativo Español Reyes Católicos," ("CCEE Reyes Católicos"), which ensures a good education to Spanish people and other citizens in Bogotá and makes links between Spain, Colombia, and other countries because it is a prestigious Institution in the city, and it offers a high-quality educational alternative.

And, when I had the opportunity, I also chose to come to the United States for several reasons:

1. I wanted to give back to America the help that I received when I was a child.
2. I wanted to help the Hispanic community that is working very hard and helping in the development of this great country.
3. I wanted to learn about this country: its language, its history, its people, its culture, and its educational system.

So, I took the opportunity that an agreement between the Spanish and American governments gives to teachers: to integrate into the American system as bilingual teachers in a regular school. This agreement has many other aspects: it lets American teachers go to Spain in post-to-post interchanges, it gives grants to American teachers to go to Spain for summer courses at universities, and more. In fact, many American teachers take advantage of these courses every year; most of them are completely free. The full conditions are on the Spanish Ministry of Culture, Education, and Sports' web page at [www.sgci.mec.es/usa](http://www.sgci.mec.es/usa).

## **DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND**

I teach at Grissom Elementary School, which is located in the South District of Houston ISD. The school presents certain special characteristics that deserve a little analysis in order to understand the focus of this project. Grissom is a well-known school, having served children in the area for 35 years. Many generations of students from this school are now integrated in different layers of Houstonian society.

Along the way, it has experienced several changes according to the demographic evolution of the city and the neighborhood. At first, it had a majority of white students. Then, African Americans moved into the neighborhood, and became the largest ethnic group represented. Today, Hispanic students constitute the largest group, making up 65% of its population. African Americans still constitute an important percentage of students, while the white population is practically nonexistent.

Regardless of their ethnicities—Hispanic or African American—the economic and socio-cultural stratum of most of the families is low or medium-low, and this is the reason why most of the students are considered *at risk*. Many of them live in trailers, have relatives in jail, suffer separation from their parents, or are menaced by drugs and alcohol. So, our students need to be followed even more carefully by the teachers and their families. They need to be supervised and controlled, and their academic performance requires a constant collaboration between parents and teachers.

I am a first grade bilingual teacher; this implies that most of the students in my class do not speak much English yet. In bilingual classes, we adapt our methodology to teach our children facing their concrete educational needs. Most of the instruction, when introducing a new concept, is in Spanish. Once they have mastered the objective in their native language, we re-teach and revise it in English (as it is their second language). They have also E.S.L. classes on a regular basis, where they study the objectives specified in the E.S.L. curriculum guidelines. Therefore, we could easily do two or more hours of English a day. The stress on English is progressively increasing as they get to higher levels. We must not forget that English is the target language and that they must be integrated in regular classes as soon as possible. Students like to learn English, and I

have a large group of them that are already almost prepared to step across this important threshold.

Hispanic students are eager to learn because they are conscious that their parents come from a place with social and economical problems, and they are fighting to get a good position for them and their families in this country. They know that knowledge of English and good grades at school are the tools that will let them to obtain a better job in the future than their parents have.

The students are also intuitive and awake to learning, and they feel the need to learn. The student group has a dramatic need to rise socially, and the students know that learning is the only way to reach this goal. Unfortunately, many families cannot help them with home- and schoolwork because of their limited academic knowledge. Also, because hard work is necessary, they work so many hours that they don't even have the time to come to school and meet the teachers.

On the other hand, they have a huge advantage that most of the time they overlook because they are not conscious of it: being bilingual is of great value. In a global world where trade, economy, and culture are more and more interrelated, speaking fluently two or more languages has an extraordinary importance. Getting ready for the future that awaits us means learning English without losing their Hispanic roots. It's a value that they shouldn't forget.

My students are six and seven years old, so the unit must be simple enough in content to be followed by children who are still in the process of learning to read. But it must also be useful to advanced students who are already considered GT and who go further in their schoolwork. As a matter of fact, the annotated bibliography serves more as a reference for teachers who would like to follow, complete, or adapt the unit to higher levels (e.g. third grade, four grade, even middle or high school) than as a list of materials ready to use in the classroom. To sum up, I intend for this unit to be practical, with contents that are useful for both teachers and students, since the lesson plans will be developed to cater to their necessities, providing them with theory and practice.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF HOME**

Having a shelter where every member of the family feels at ease and healthy, can enjoy a personal and comfortable space, and can find common areas to share, could be the best tool to keep a family united and solid for a long period of time.

It is a necessity to raise children and give them the opportunity to get their independence at the correct time and manner. In these days, when the family is usually disintegrated and broken, with youngsters facing all kinds of problems such as alcohol and drugs, the home should be an element of union that helps to integrate the family.



I strongly believe that our role as educators is to take advantage of all possibilities that education offers. Fomenting love and care for the home, we are setting the principles for a future independent and responsible life, helping our students to find a starting point in their socialization.

Some people live in houses that are without character, boring, or even ugly. Usually this is not due to a lack of money to invest in the house, but to a lack of the necessary formation and the family not being conscious of the fact that home is the center of life for all family members. So, they spend considerable amounts of money in unsubstantial things rather than using a little bit more of the budget to spend rationally on their house. They do not realize that the house is like a “living being” that transmits its feelings to its inhabitants. It can contribute to the growth of family life and collaborate in keeping the family united and solid.

Every house can be easily transformed into a home if minimal effort is made on it. There are many activities that the whole family can do to improve their house: painting, cleaning up, gardening, and restoring furniture are some of them. These activities can also help to keep the family busy and happy. Luckily, many families do the right thing and have wonderful houses where they gracefully share their free time, enjoying a comfortable and warm environment.

I think that the knowledge that can be built around a house will be very motivating for students and may be very important for their future development. Understanding the importance of home and giving it a significant role in their lives, would orient them, focusing their interests on real things and giving them a feeling of belonging and identity. Discussing this topic at school will form a bridge connecting their two worlds: school and home.

One of the primal instincts is a need for shelter, for a secure place where people can store their belongings; sleep confidently; build a family; come back to rest after a hard journey; and forget, for a while, the problems and troubles that surround them. There are many sayings dealing with this idea that indicate its widespread importance: “Home, sweet home,” “God bless any corner of this house,” “Everyone in his home, and God in every home,” and, of course, the words pronounced by Judy Garland in “The Wizard of Oz,” as her character, Dorothy, comes back from Oz: “There’s no place like home.”

At one time, the right to have a secure, safe, and nice place to live was reserved for rich people. Then came the Industrial Revolution, which brought with it many political and economic changes: the middle class grew and grew, a nearly constant string of inventions made construction techniques cheaper and easier; and more and more people were given the possibility of private property, allowing them to live in a more comfortable and human way.

When the first pilgrims arrived to this country, they were escaping from hard living conditions, looking for a better life, and trying to find religious freedom. They found in this land a wide fan of possibilities and the dawn of a New World. They began to work with energy and optimism, with the construction of houses as the first and most urgent work to undertake.

Their houses became a symbol of their freedom and power and the yeast of the spirit of the American home. The living conditions in America—with the Gold Rush migrations to the West first, and the search for better places later—marked the character of people. On the other hand, the enormous extension of building and farming lands, and the abundance of forests giving timber to construct, gave shapes and characteristics to constructions that were very different from European ones. Even though the architectural influence crossed the ocean, styles and designs were the same on multiple occasions.

The progressive acceleration of construction techniques and the inventions that flourished after the discovery of electricity transformed the American way of life and strengthened the feeling of the American dream of having a home. The price of land was inexpensive, considering the big spaces in this continent and the relative shortage of population. The conditions necessary for the flourishing of building were met, and the last century witnessed the accomplishment of the American Dream for many American families.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study of a house involves multiple aspects of learning. It covers several social studies objectives related to history, geography, art, and society strands. Besides, it is connected to science, technology, mathematics, and language, and can develop many skills and procedures. I believe that a global approach to learning allows the students to better understand the instructional material, facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge and reinforcing previous learning.

I will explain to the students the importance of dwellings, and they will discuss and find the reasons why human beings have needed places to protect themselves, from the time of prehistoric caves to our days. Houses let us be safeguarded from inclement weather, dangerous animals, and even from other people who are enemies. I will show them the beginning of the film “2001: A Space Odyssey,” and they will discuss the importance of fire and the need for a sheltering place for human survival. They will draw the “cave” where they live, their paintings, their clothes, and their tools.

I will teach them the importance of the environment to the house. I will show them several pictures of different constructions: houses over the water, houses in the middle of the desert, houses in the arctic regions, cabins in the forest, detached houses, apartments, castles, palaces, bungalows, cottages, mansions, etc, taking into account that, in America, we can find every kind of construction.

I will organize discussions to find out the different characteristics of each type of construction and the reasons why each type is made in a particular way; observing the influence of factors such as climate, materials available in a given area, and economic possibilities.

I will make the students draw the house where they are living, and they will write a few sentences about it. I will organize a discussion about the differences between the “caves” from our ancestors, comparing them with the houses where we live in present day.

I will explain the differences between a country house and the city house, comparing pictures that show them, discussing the different tools and duties that we can find in each of them, and discussing how the way of life can determine the characteristics of the houses. Students will make a list of tools, machines and electrical appliances for each type of house; we will compare and contrast the importance of these tools in one house and the futility of some of the same tools in the other.

I will organize a field trip to show them different kinds of houses that we can find around the city. We will take pictures of them, and we will make an exhibition by decorating a bulletin board in the hallways to show the whole school the work they have done and the images of buildings in the city. I will also make a video of the trip and organize an exhibition for parents, community people, and anyone interested in the school.

I will narrate or read them *The Three Little Pigs* and discuss the importance of having a well-constructed and solid house, the need to do things well, the importance of cooperation when developing projects, and the rewards for the effort we must apply to everything we do in our lives. The students will draw a “well-constructed” house, one which the wolf could not get into.

I will show them pictures illustrating different stages in the construction of a house and the process of it: designs and plans, basements, structure, walls, details, windows, doors, roofs, etc. so that they understand the difficulty in constructing a house. We will brainstorm on the importance of planning the complex and even the simplest of activities in order to do a job well. We need to develop the plans following an order and a sequence. They will organize these activities, cutting and pasting disordered pictures and putting them in the right way.

I will show them pictures with different kinds of houses, discussing and determining the materials used in their construction, establishing a correlation between the materials the environment offers and the houses we make with them. Students will understand how human beings can modify natural resources to use them, because most of the time we cannot take things as they are in Nature, but must manufacture them and prepare them for a purpose.

I will show some different materials for roofs, and they will investigate and make a list of things people use for roofing in different cultures and places, depending also on their budgets: tiles, shingles, boards, straw, metal. Each student will choose one and will make a drawing of a house with a particular type of roof, writing a sentence that explains the drawing.

I will present to the students a floor plan indicating that there are different names for the spaces in a house. They will brainstorm and discuss the names of different rooms in a house, trying to find as many as possible. Then they will make a list of furniture and accessories they can find in each room. They will collectively make a poster showing a big floor plan and will draw, color, and cut all the elements we can find inside, labeling and sticking them on the poster.

I will ask them to investigate things about their houses, finding out when they were built, how long their families have been living there, the number of rooms, how many people live in the house, how many square feet the houses have, if they are owners or renters, how wide the façade is, how big their room is, etc. With all this information, I will use mathematics, making graphs, tally tables, problems, and diagrams.

I will tell them how to construct a model of a cabin made of ice-cream sticks, organizing a contest with a little prize for the best ones. To connect with their homes, they will do this project as homework with the help of their families during a period of one or two weeks. When they bring them back, we will organize an exhibition for the other classes and the families, and we will elect a jury to select the winners of the contest, with the principal of the school giving away the prizes in a public ceremony.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson Plan 1: Houses now and then: Prehistoric and modern homes.**

#### ***Objectives***

- To demonstrate an understanding of the past, the present, and the future (HISD SS 1.3. History).

#### ***Materials***

Overhead; Slides; VCR; Film *2001: A Space Odyssey*; Books; Construction paper; Scissors; Glue; Markers; Popsicle sticks

#### ***Activities***

1. Display a picture of prehistoric caves and another picture of a contemporary house. Ask students to brainstorm on the differences and similarities between both dwellings.
2. Play the beginning of the film *2001 Space Odyssey*. Discuss it with students.

3. Ask students to imagine they are living in prehistoric times. Discuss the importance of shelter, inventions and tools for human survival. Students will make a list of dangers and needs and solutions to them.
4. Students will make a picture of the “cave” in which they would live, their clothes, their tools, etc. Students will make a word bank of tools we use everyday and that facilitate our life, writing the names on post-it notes and sticking them on a bulletin board. They will draw pictures of them to stick next to the words.
5. Guide students in the process of constructing a model of a cabin made of popsicle sticks. As a home-school connection, they will do this homework project with the help of their families throughout the course of a couple of weeks. There are also other possibilities for making models of different materials; at the Enchanted Learning site (see bibliography), there are several models. Tell the students that the best works are going to win prizes, and that the Principal of the school or another person who is important to them, is going to give the prizes to winners in a public ceremony. All students must at least receive a certificate by which to remember the activity, and which will show them the importance their teacher gives to this activity.
6. When students bring the cabins back to school, organize an exhibition for the other classes and the families, and elect a jury to select the winners of the contest.

## **Lesson Plan 2**

### ***Objectives***

- Identify and describe the physical and human characteristics of places (HISD SS.1.6.a Geography).
- Describe the similarities and differences that exist among families and the ways they meet basic human needs (HISD SS.1.14 Culture).

### ***Materials***

Slides showing different types of houses; Drawing paper; Scissors; Markers; Colors; Glue

### ***Activities***

1. Display several pictures of different constructions: houses over the water, houses in the middle of the desert, houses in the arctic regions, cabins in the forest, detached houses, apartments, castles, palaces, bungalows, cottages, mansions, etc.
2. Brainstorm about the characteristics of each dwelling. Ask students why they think each house is built the way it is. Focus on the influence of factors such as climate, materials available in the area, and economic possibilities of the inhabitants.
3. Make students draw their own houses and write a few sentences about them, telling some of their characteristics.
4. Display both sets of pictures (the caves and their real houses) and discuss the differences between them.
5. Have students write a few sentences telling the benefits of living in a clean, modern house.

### **Lesson Plan 3: Country House and City House.**

#### ***Objectives***

- Appreciate the cultural differences between living in the country and living in the city. Observe the different tools one uses in each situation.
- Describe how tools, appliances and other forms of technology have changed communication, transportation, recreation, and work for families (HISD SS.1.16. Science, Technology and Society).

#### ***Materials***

VCR; *Ice Age* film; Overhead projector; Slides; Scissors; Markers; Paper; Glue

#### ***Activities***

1. Play a portion of *Ice Age* and discuss the difficulty of living under hard conditions. Explain that people need shelter, and discuss how the city appeared.
2. Display pictures showing country and city houses. Compare them, brainstorming on the differences between them. Discuss with students the different tools you could find in each one and how the use of these tools would determine the way the inhabitants work and live.
3. Have students make a list of the tools, machines, and electrical appliances that might exist in each house.
4. Have students present their lists and compare and contrast the importance of different tools in one type of house and their futility in another house.
5. Display on a bulletin board a picture of a country house and a city house. Have students make labels with tools one can use when living in these houses, sticking them below the corresponding picture.

### **Lesson Plan 4: How buildings are made.**

#### ***Objectives***

- Acquire information from a variety of oral and visual sources (HISD SS.1.17.a Social studies skills).
- Sequence and categorize information (HISD SS.1.17.b Social studies skills).
- Create visual and written materials (HISD SS.1.18.b Social studies skills).
- Create and use simple maps to identify the locations of places (HISD SS 1.5.a Geography).

#### ***Materials***

*The Three Little Pigs*; Overhead projector; Slides; VCR

#### ***Activities***

1. Show the students the part of the film where the characters construct a house, and discuss the importance of working in groups.

2. Read *The Three Little Pigs* and discuss the importance of having a well-constructed and solid house, the necessity of doing things well and being responsible, and the importance of cooperation when developing projects. Have students draw a “well-constructed” house, into which the wolf could not get.
3. Display pictures showing different stages in the construction of a house and the building process: designs and plans, basements, structure, walls, isolations, windows, doors, roofs, etc. Make students aware of the difficulty of constructing a house. Brainstorm on the importance of planning the complex, and even the simplest activities, in order to do a job well. Focus on the need to develop plans following an order and a sequence. Have students organize different building activities, copying them from a disordered list and sequencing them properly.
4. Display pictures with different kinds of houses, discussing and finding out the materials used in their construction, establishing a correlation between the materials the environment offers and the houses we make with them. Make students understand how human beings can modify their natural resources to use them, because most of the time humans cannot take things as they are in nature, but must manufacture them and prepare them for a purpose.
5. Display different materials for roofs. Have students investigate and make a list of things people use for roofing in different cultures and places, depending on the budget they have: tiles, shingles, boards, straw, metal. Have each student choose one and make a drawing of a house with a particular type of roof, writing a sentence that explains the drawing.
6. Present students a floor plan indicating that there are different names for the spaces into a house. Have them brainstorm and discuss the names of the different rooms in a house, trying to find as many as possible. Then have them make a list of the furniture and accessories they can find in each room. Lastly, have them collectively make a poster showing a big floor plan and draw, color, and cut all the elements found inside, labeling and sticking them onto the poster.

### ***Extra activity***

Organize a field trip to show students different kinds of houses that we can find around the city. In Houston there are many very interesting places to visit; show the students all the beautiful, old, and well-preserved houses. One of these places is the Heights, where students can admire old mansions that are landmarks of the city.

Prepare the field trip, giving the students information about the place to visit. Tell them about the history of the houses, show them pictures of some of them, make a map, motivate them, investigate with students in Internet, and collaborate with parents or other teachers.

Make a video of the field trip, and take pictures of the houses. Use this material at school, making a display on a bulletin board for other students, parents and community members to see. Exhibit the video for your students, others groups of students, and for their parents.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

*The Three Little Pigs*. Any version.

This tale tells the importance of well-done work.

Culbertson, Margaret. *Texas Houses Built By The Book, The Use of Published Designs, 1850-1925*. Texas A & M UP, 1999.

This book explains that many houses in Texas were built following illustrations in catalogues when they were not ordered ready-made. It presents a special analysis of Waxahachie with pictures that demonstrate the influence of the catalogues.

Culbertson, Margaret. *Mail-Order Mansions. (Legacies. Volume IV, Number 2)*. 1992.

This article explains the influence of catalogues and magazines on the architecture of wonderful old houses in Dallas and northern Texas.

Fishers, Timothy. Drawings: Kolb, Katleen. *Huts, hovels, & houses*. MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company Inc., 1977.

It narrates the experience of certain boys who start building huts and progressively their improved building techniques until they succeeded in constructing houses.

Fox, Stephen (Text), Gerald Moorhead, and Yolita Schmidt, (Photographs). *Houston. Architectural Guide. Second Edition*. The American Institute of Architects, 1999.

This is a catalogue of the architecturally significant buildings and places of Houston, organized by zones and characteristics. It analyzes the growth of the city of Houston in a context that takes into account the boom of the 1970s and the immediate urban past from the late 1940s to 1970s.

Friedman, Avi. *The Adaptable House*. McGraw-Hill 2002.

This book explains how the need for remodeling arises because of the conflict between the dynamic nature of people and the static nature of homes.

Gowans, Alan. *The Comfortable House*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1986.

This book defends the importance of prefabrication in the building industry, and describes how it allowed so many houses to be erected in less time.

Guild, Robin. *The Victorian House Book*. Rizzoli International Publications, 1989.

This book analyzes the building heritage in America and the difficulty of preserving it from a loss of authenticity because of new materials and tendencies that do not respect the aesthetics of this heritage. It also studies the characteristics and features of this style, illustrating with wonderful pictures and graphics of houses, furniture, and objects throughout.



Hess, Alan. *Rancho Deluxe. Rustic Dreams & Real Western Livings*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000.

This book has excellent pictures by Alan Weintraub. Hess tells how the importance of ranchos as living places came with the boom of the suburban style of life. Before this, life in ranchos was not at all idyllic, but hard and difficult. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it turned to relaxation and ease.

Highsmith, Carol M. and Ted Landphair. Photographs by Highsmith, Carol M. *America Restored*. Preservation Press. National Trust for Historic Preservation. 1994.

This book shows many wonderful restored buildings: hotels, manors, cottages, stores, taverns, riverboats, battleships, churches, ranchos, theatres, mansions, wagons, street clocks, missions, factories, mills, covered bridges, colleges, plantations, and more.

Hunter, Christine. *Ranches, Row houses, and Railroads Flats: American Homes: How They Shape our Landscapes and Neighborhoods*.

This book is an introduction to housing in the United States, and it gives the requirements for a home.

Kostof, Spiro. *America by design*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

This book describes how it is the right of every American to be a landowner and discusses the evolution of houses from the idyllic country life to the busy cities.

Langsam Sobol, Harriet. Photographs Agree, Patricia. *Pete's House*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1978.

This book narrates the process of building a house from the blueprints, explaining technical but easily understood details of the construction of a house.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

This book provides a complete review of architectural fashions and styles throughout American history.

Moore, Charles, Gerald Allen, and Donlyn Lyndon. *The Place of Houses*. University of California Press, 1974.

This book shows how a house is a delicate balanced of surroundings, rhythms, and dreams, and how the builder must consider all of these factors.

Morris, Ann. *Houses and Homes*. Harper Collins Children's Book Group, 1995.

This book shows a wide variety of shelters with clear photographs and a simple text. It is an excellent story for early readers.

Red, Brian. Illustrations Tony Goffe. *Building a House*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Inc., 1977.

This book, which is good for young children, describes simply the steps of building a house, from the foundation to the roof.

Shue, Jenkins & Shin. *Cottages, Charming Seaside*. Tidewaters Designs. The Sater Design Collection, 1998.

This book is a collection of wonderful cottage designs. It defines the cottage as an amalgam of architectural styles rooted at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Southern coastal and Caribbean islands cultures. It defines the concept of a home as a comfortable place to live in. It is a hymn to beautiful houses everywhere.

Schoenauer, Norbert. *6,000 Years of Housing*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992.

This book gives the history of the evolution of dwellings from the dawn of urban civilizations to the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, illustrating the different kinds of shelters it mentions and describing widely and ecologically the modern way of life: bungalows, court-garden houses, attached houses, point-blocks, etc.

Werner, Frank. *New Living in Old Houses*. Trans. Harry Stockman. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982.

This book illustrates how, with many exemplary renovations, old houses can be transformed into modern and functional dwellings.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House on the Prairie*. Horn Book Children's Classics, 1976.

This book discusses the author's life and her experiences. *My First Little House Book Series* is adapted for beginning readers.

## **Films**

*2001: A Space Odyssey*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1968. (139 minutes)

The beginning of the film shows the steps from ape to human and the first shelter and inventions.

*Ice Age*. Directed by Carlos Saldanha and Chris Wedge. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2002. (81 minutes)

This animated movie illustrates the difficulty of surviving in the Paleolithic Era.

## **Internet Resources**

*Activities for ESL Students*. 2003. The Internet TESL Journal. June 2003. <<http://a4esl.org>>.

In this URL there are several quizzes to help students practice vocabulary about houses, each at a different level of difficulty.

*Ask ERIC.* Syracuse University. June 2003. <<http://www.askeric.org>>.

In this domain there are many lesson plans. We can find a lesson plan of *Little House on the Prairie*.

*Enchanted Learning.* June 2003. <<http://www.enchantedlearning.com>>.

There are several pages with interesting activities related to houses, especially “Homes and Other Dwellings,” which shows how to construct different models of houses at school. “Label the Rooms” shows how to label simple floor plans.

Brain, Marshall. *How House Construction Works.* 2003. How Stuff Works, Inc. June 2003. <<http://www.howstuffworks.com/house>>.

At this URL, Marshall Brain describes—with multiple pictures and a technical but easy description—the process of building a house step-by-step.

*Materiales.* Consejería de Educación. June 2003. <[www.sgci.mec.es/usa/publicaciones.shtml](http://www.sgci.mec.es/usa/publicaciones.shtml)>.

“Materiales” is a magazine for multicultural learning, edited by the Spanish Ministry of education. There are lesson plans for bilingual teachers for different levels and topics. In magazine number four, lesson unit number five is “Ciudad humana, vivienda inteligente.” written by myself and by my daughter, who is also a bilingual teacher at Tinsley Elementary School in Houston ISD.

The following web sites show good examples of *pallozas*:

- [www.fillos.org/fillos/arquitectura/pallozas.htm](http://www.fillos.org/fillos/arquitectura/pallozas.htm)
- [www.archilibre.free.fr/HORRESPI/osencares/palloza/htm](http://www.archilibre.free.fr/HORRESPI/osencares/palloza/htm)
- [www.agalicia.com/ancares/pallozas](http://www.agalicia.com/ancares/pallozas)
- [www.ponfedial.es/spain/cent/fotos/palloza.htm](http://www.ponfedial.es/spain/cent/fotos/palloza.htm)
- [www.inferno.asap.um.maine.edu/faculty/march/spatec/sharon/pallozed.htm](http://www.inferno.asap.um.maine.edu/faculty/march/spatec/sharon/pallozed.htm)
- [http://www.geocities.com/galiciaespallada/arquit\\_galega\\_pallozas.htm](http://www.geocities.com/galiciaespallada/arquit_galega_pallozas.htm)
- <http://www.centros2.pntic.mec.es/cp.penalba/pallozas.html>

These sites show pictures of Lugo’s Roman Rampart:

- [www.concellodelugo.org/muralla/](http://www.concellodelugo.org/muralla/)
- [www.crtvg.es/espanol/camweb/clugo2.html](http://www.crtvg.es/espanol/camweb/clugo2.html)