

Story of a Building

There is a story to tell about every building: every house, school, shop, hospital, factory, sports stadium, place of worship.

The process of planning, designing and constructing buildings is called **architecture**. Architecture is all around us. It is central to our lives.

An **architect** is someone who loves to design and is trained and qualified to work on the planning and design of buildings and bridges.

The Arts Society encourages children to be curious and to ask questions about the buildings they see:

**How old is it? Why was it built? What is its purpose?
Why is it that style and shape? What materials have been used?**



Mosque



Gurdwara



Vihara

The stories of six places of worship in Birmingham are told on the following pages.

An illustrated guide for each of these buildings may be found on The Arts Society website.

<https://birmingham-faith-visits.theartsociety.org/>



Synagogue



Temple or mandir



Cathedral



The Gurdwara served by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha

The development of 18-20 Soho Road B21



1900 Houses for industrial managers were later demolished.



In 1970 the site was used for a club for Polish people who had settled in Birmingham.



1990 A place of worship for the Sikh community was built on the same site.



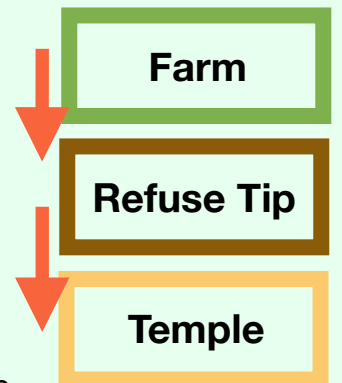
(Left) The Golden temple in Amritsar in the Punjab, Northern India is the holiest gurdwara of the Sikh religion. It influenced the design of the gurdwara in Soho Road. In what way is it similar?



Shri Venkateswara (Balaji Temple)

The development of Balaji Temple for Hindus.

It took the founders 10 years to find 30 acres of land to build a Hindu place of worship and community centre in the West Midlands. The land used to be a farm but then became a refuse tip and is near the canal and river.



Balaji is the largest Hindu temple complex in Europe and the UK.

The design is based on Shri Venkateswara in Tirupati in India which has many visitors. Tirupati is surrounded by hills so as part of the landscape at Balaji seven Faith Hills were constructed to show respect for the other major faiths.



Tirupati in Southern India

The towers (or gopuras) are hand carved and constructed in a traditional style.



Balaji in West Midlands



Birmingham Buddhist Vihara



A. Murtagh

In 1985 it was decided to establish a pagoda in Birmingham. Some old houses near the reservoir were to be demolished. The land was bought by the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust.

The design for the building came from the ancient pagodas in Myanmar.



Ancient pagodas in Myanmar (Burma)

Two artists from Myanmar came to Birmingham to help with the construction.

There are three buildings on the site to fulfil three purposes: a shrine for Buddhists to perform traditional ceremonies, an academy where people can learn about Buddhism and a sanctuary to find peace and tranquility.



Birmingham Central Mosque

A mosque is a house of worship where Muslims come together to pray and to hear the Imam's sermon at Friday prayers.

Birmingham Central Mosque was a new build in the 1970s to provide a place of worship for the Muslims living in Birmingham.

The architect included the key features of a mosque: the dome and the minaret.



1975 -2021



2022

In 2022, the mosque is being extended and renovated. The dome and minaret are still featured.

The decoration on the windows shows geometric patterns which are an important strand of Islamic art. They can be seen on mosques throughout the world.

✝ St. Philips Cathedral, Birmingham

Thomas Archer, an architect 300 years ago, was inspired by buildings he saw when on a Grand Tour of Italy as a young man. These are **Baroque** style with high ceilings, tall pillars and arches. He used these ideas for St Philips. This style of architecture in England is known as **English Baroque**.

Another example is St Paul's Cathedral in London.

Things of beauty are often added to buildings in later years. Stained glass windows designed by Burne-Jones were added more than 100 years later.



A Baroque style church in Italy



St Philips as it was in 1732.



.Birmingham Cathedral

✧ Birmingham Progressive Synagogue

In 2006, a decision was taken to build a new Jewish synagogue. The **original synagogue** built in 1935 in Sheepcote Street, Birmingham was sold to developers.

A new purpose built synagogue was constructed nearby.

In 2008 the **new synagogue** opened. The design reflects the three purposes of a synagogue. It has three floors: one for worship and prayer, another for learning and the third to enable people to meet each other.



217 apartments on 33 storeys were built on the Sheepcote Street site. The building is over 100m high and was opened in 2020.



A. Murtagh

A building can be a **'new build'** - a new construction



'New builds'

← 2022

500 years ago! →



Sometimes an existing structure may be **renovated** or **refurbished**, Or it may be **adapted** to be used for a different purpose.



A Murtagh

These buildings were **adapted**.

This used to be a factory in Birmingham.

What was manufactured here? The clue is in the name above the door.

It is now used for apartments.

Can you spot the clue that this building used to be a Victorian school? It has been **adapted** to be used for restaurants and shops.



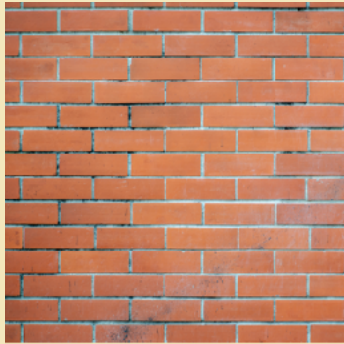
A Murtagh



In 1850 this Victorian building used to be a chapel for Christian worship.

150 years later, it was **adapted** to be a gurdwara for Sikh worship.

Activity: What materials have been used for buildings in your area?



Brick



Wood



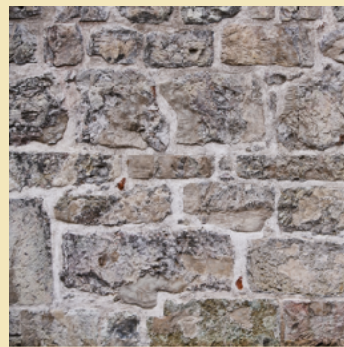
Aluminium & Steel



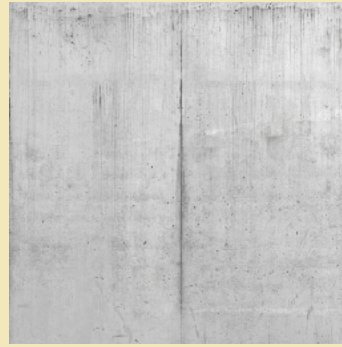
Glass



Tiles



Stone



Concrete



Plastics

Teacher: For this activity you will need: clipboards, pencils and chart.

Create a chart on which buildings may be listed on one axis and materials on the other.

Photocopy the chart, one for each child.

BUILDINGS	MATERIALS							
	Brick	Wood	Metals	Glass	Tiles	Stone	Concrete	Plastics
School	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shed		✓		✓				
Office			✓	✓				✓
Shop	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
House	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Example

Teacher with children:

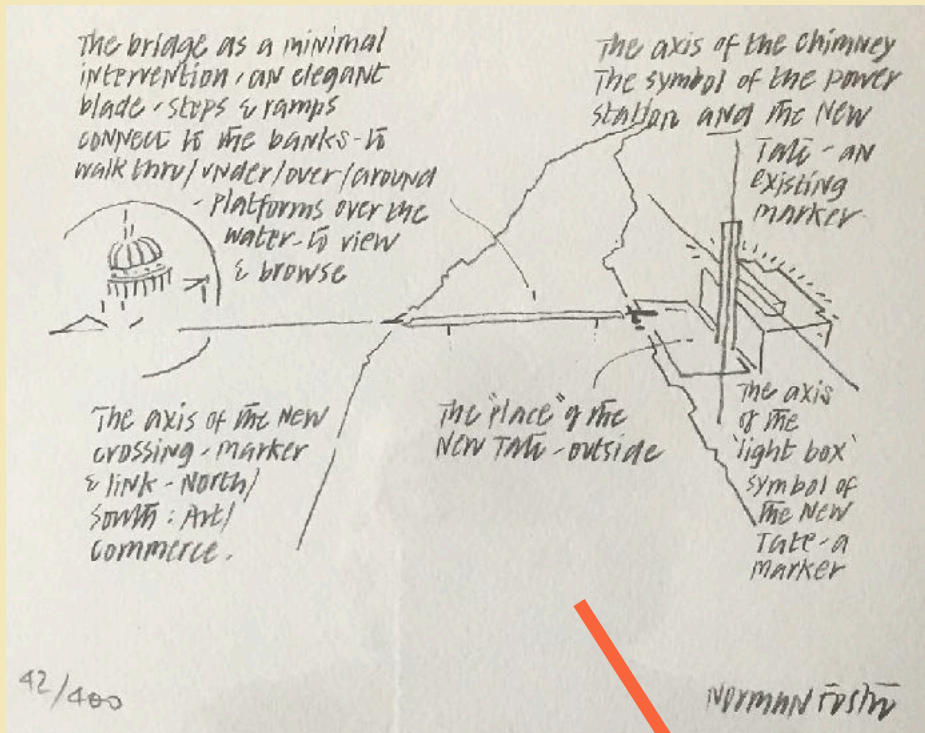
Take a walk around the local area.

Look at the use of the buildings.

Which of these building materials are **natural**? Which are **man-made**?

I have an idea...

An architect sometimes scribbles an idea on a bit of paper. In 1997, Norman Foster, a famous architect, started to create the Millennium Bridge across the River Thames in London with a rough sketch.



Original Sketch

This bridge was designed to span the river from the Tate Art Gallery on the south bank to St Pauls cathedral in the City of London.

It is a steel suspension bridge for pedestrians.

The bridge spans 320 metres. Constructed from aluminium, steel and concrete, the 4 metre wide pathway is held in place by four steel cables on either side which are controlled by 2 Y shaped supports with complex motors.



Millennium Bridge, London 2000

Do you have an idea for a building or a bridge that would improve your local area? Draw a rough sketch.

The Royal Institute of British Architects' (RIBA) learning programme offers opportunities to explore, question and celebrate architecture. The National Schools Programme is provided free of charge to schools. It is part of an educational drive to increase children's interest in architecture and the built environment.

There are interactive workshops and activities with some free downloads.

For more information about the learning programme or events:

<https://www.architecture.com/education-cpd-and-careers/learning>

learning@riba.org

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66 Portland Place
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Architecture Workshops for Schools

Architecture Workshops for Schools have been established to bring an understanding of architecture and the built environment to children. Using only wooden dowel and rubber bands, through hands-on building activities and utilising all aspects of STEM, participants 'learn-by-doing', creating many varied and wondrous large building models, structures and sculptures. The workshops make learning fun and the complex simple.

In liaison with The Arts Society, Martin Jennings has adapted the workshops for each of the six places of worship featured in the Birmingham Faith Visits resources.

<https://birmingham-faith-visits.theartsociety.org/>

The workshops take place in a school hall or gym .
with up to 45 pupils in each 120 minute session.
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