



Stilt Houses

(art + social studies)

A stilt house is a type of house constructed on posts that raise it above either water or land. This type of construction allows people and communities to live and thrive in areas that have very little dry land available. Although stilt houses were common in Scandinavia and parts of Europe in the Neolithic era, they can still be found in South America, Northeast Asia, West Africa and even in the United States. Stilt houses can be found practically anywhere people live in wet coastal regions.

Stilt houses come in a wide variety of styles. Some are built using sophisticated materials and building techniques, while others are made with natural materials collected from surrounding areas to create a very basic structure. In this lesson, students build a stilt house while being mindful of the area where the house might exist and the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

Grade Levels 3-6

Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Materials

General's® No. 2 Cedar Pencil (20317-1020); one per student

Blick® Plastic Ruler, 12" (55403-1012); one per student

Wooden Dowel Rods, 12", package of 12 (60448-1412); four rods per student

Easy Cutter for Lightweight Wood Strips (35106-1000); one for teacher's use

Snippy® Scissors pointed, package of 12 (57040-2009); need one pair of scissors per student

Blick® Construction Card, 18" x 24", Dark Brown (11408-8039); share one sheet among six students

Delta® Sobo® White Glue, 2-oz bottle (23820-1002); share one between two students

Optional Decorating Materials

Colorfoil Economy Roll, 4-1/2" x 20-ft, Brass (60506-8410) or Coppertone (60506-8110)

Shade-Tex™ Rubbing Plates, Architecture Set (22809-1004)

Folia Corrugated Sheets 9" x 12", 10-sheet package, Gold and Silver (12231-1030) or Classic Colors (11231-1010)

Roylco® Decorative Papers, "Around the World," 96-sheet assortment (11262-1140)

Decorative Paper Assortments, 1-lb (12440-1001)

Indian Seed Beads, 3-oz, Multi-Color assortment (60725-1003)

Trait-Tex® Cotton Warp, Light, 2,100-yd spool (65211-1375)

Raffia, 6-oz package, Natural (60908-1376) or Mixed Color (60908-1005)

Preparation

1. Discuss some of the coastal regions of the world where people live in stilt houses. Discuss the lifestyles of the people who live in them.
2. Cut 18" x 24" pieces of construction card into 4" x 18" sheets.
3. Cut 12" dowels into 9" pieces.
6. Glue the top edge of the roof onto the four walls, making sure to connect the structural dowels with glue to keep the roof securely attached.
7. Decorate the stilt houses with windows, doors, shutters, lights, curtains, railings, porches, rugs and more.

Process

1. Each student receives a 4" x 18" piece of construction card to create a square house "frame." Have students measure and make a mark every 4-1/2" along the 18" side. Fold the construction card at each of these marks to create four equal sides. When the card is unfolded, it should form a box. Do not cut the walls apart.
2. Provide students with four 9" dowel rods to be used as the stilts. Glue a rod inside each fold of the construction card along the full 4" of the paper. The rod will stick out of the bottom of the sheet by 5". The rods can be cut shorter before they are glued in place if needed. When the rods are in place, lay the piece flat to dry.
3. The outside of the house (the opposite side of where the dowels are glued) can be covered with decorative paper before the next step. Windows can also be cut out carefully. Make sure to wait for the glue to dry if students are gluing a decorative sheet during this process. When dry, fold the pieces again to create defined corners for the house.
4. Fold the paper house frame together and glue the ends, making a complete square. If the house does not stand evenly, glue dowel "scraps" to the bottom of the stilts until even.
5. Create a roof with construction card, corrugated paper, paper, raffia (to simulate grass or palm fronds) or metal sheets, which can be embossed to create beautiful effects. Make sure the roof isn't too heavy for the frame to support. The roof can be flat or an A-frame. Remind students to consider the climate where the house might exist while choosing materials and making structural decisions.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

Content Standard #4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures.

5-8 Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts.

