

# Let's Be Architects!

## Designing for Community

### Section 1: Lesson Preparation

---

**Grade:** 4 - 5th

**Time:** 2-3 class periods, approximately 45-60 minutes each

**Unit/Subjects:** Social Studies | Visual Arts | Florida History | St. Augustine History

**Essential Question:** *How can architects use creativity and problem-solving to design buildings that meet the needs of a community?*

#### Lesson Summary and Focus

Students will learn about architects **John M. Carrère and Thomas Hastings** and their work designing Henry Flagler's Hotel Alcazar in St. Augustine. Students will examine how architects consider a building's **purpose, location, users, materials, appearance, and surroundings** when creating a design.

Students will then become "community architects." Working individually or in small teams, they will identify a need in their own community and design a building that helps solve that problem. They will create an architectural drawing or model and explain how their design addresses the community's need.

#### National/State Learning Standards

VA.4.F.3.1: Create art to promote awareness of school and/or community concerns.

VA.4.F.2.1: Discuss how artists and designers have made an impact on the community.

VA.5.F.3.1: Create artwork to promote public awareness of community and/or global concerns.

VA.5.H.2.3: Discuss artworks found in public venues to identify the significance of the work within the community.

SS.4.A.6.3: Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida.

#### Specific Learning Target Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify Carrère and Hastings as the architects of the Hotel Alcazar.
- Explain that architects design buildings to serve particular purposes and users.
- Identify ways a building can reflect its location's history, culture, and environment.
- Identify a need or problem within their community.
- Develop a building design that addresses that need.
- Explain how their architectural choices help solve the identified problem.
- Create and present a simple architectural drawing or 3-D model.

## **Academic Language**

- **Architect** – A person who designs buildings and plans how they will be constructed.
- **Architecture** – The art and science of designing buildings and other structures.
- **Community** – A group of people who live, work, or spend time in the same area.
- **Need** – Something people require or would benefit from.
- **Design** – A plan or drawing showing how something will be made or built.
- **Blueprint** – A detailed drawing or plan for a building or structure.
- **Purpose** – The reason something exists or is created.
- **Façade** – The front or exterior face of a building.
- **Problem-solving** – Finding ways to address a challenge or need.

## **Resources/Materials**

- **Vocabulary worksheet**
- **Hotel Alcazar photographs and prompt questions.**
- **Architect reading passages and corresponding class activities**
- ***Become Community Architects* lesson plan**
- **Student design worksheet**
- **Exit Ticket**

**All materials are located at the end of this lesson plan.**

## Section 2: Instructional Planning

---

### Anticipatory Set

- I will begin my lesson by having students observe photographs of the Hotel Alcazar and ask them guiding discussion questions.
- I will use the *Meet the Architects* reading passage to introduce the topic and build key knowledge.

### Means of Representation

- Students will read the *Meet the Architects* passage by themselves or in small groups.
- I will use the vocabulary worksheet as a reference for students' discussions.

### Means of Engagement

- I, the educator, will provide a guided discussion regarding the role of the architects who designed the Hotel Alcazar and how architects can help shape communities today.
- I will introduce students to the hands-on activities:
  - Allow students to choose a community need or problem.
  - Students may work independently or in small groups.
  - Encourage brainstorming, collaboration, and peer feedback.

### Means of Expression

Summative assessment:

- Vocabulary worksheet
- Assess the completed drawing/model and explanation.
- Evaluate understanding of community need, problem-solving, creativity, design, and communication.

Formative assessment:

- Hotel Alcazar photo observation and classroom discussion
- Exit ticket

### Section 3: Vocabulary Worksheet

---

Match each definition to its corresponding term.

A person who designs buildings and plans how they will be constructed.

**Façade**

A group of people who live, work, or spend time in the same area.

**Architecture**

A detailed drawing or plan for a building or structure.

**Blueprint**

The art and science of designing buildings and other structures.

**Community**

The front or exterior face of a building.

**Architect**

## Section 4: Meet the Architects & Corresponding Activities

---

### Part 1: Meet the Architects

#### "What Does a Building Say?"

Show students photographs of the Hotel Alcazar and ask:

- What do you notice first?
- What do you think this building was used for?
- Who do you think used it?
- What might an architect have needed to think about before designing it?
- Why might someone want a building to look beautiful as well as function well?

Introduce **Carrère and Hastings**, the architectural firm responsible for designing the Hotel Alcazar for Henry Flagler in St. Augustine. This reading passage pairs well with the Hotel Alcazar reading passage in the *Hotel Alcazar: Health, Wellness, and Luxury* lesson plan.

#### Reading Passage:

John Mervin Carrère (1858–1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860–1929) were two important American architects during the Gilded Age, a period in the late 1800s and early 1900s when the United States was growing, and many new buildings, businesses, and cities were being developed.

Carrère and Hastings studied architecture at the famous École des Beaux-Arts (French for “School of Fine Arts”) in Paris, France. After returning to New York, they gained experience working with the well-known architecture firm McKim, Mead & White. In 1885, they started their own architecture firm.

Their big opportunity came when Gilded Age industrialist Henry Flagler hired them to design hotels and churches in St. Augustine, Florida. Between 1885 and 1890, they helped create some of the city's most beautiful and impressive buildings. Their work helped make St. Augustine an important destination for visitors.

After their success in St. Augustine, Carrère and Hastings became nationally recognized architects. They designed many different kinds of buildings and public spaces, including libraries, hotels, homes, parks, and government buildings. Their designs drew on the Beaux-Arts style, which emphasized beauty, balance, careful planning, and classical details.

Some of their best-known projects include Flagler's Whitehall in Palm Beach, Florida; the New York Public Library; and the Henry Clay Frick residence in New York City.

Today, Carrère and Hastings are remembered for helping shape American architecture during the Gilded Age. Their buildings continue to show how architecture can combine art, history, and function.

## Architecture Detective Activity

Explain to students that the Hotel Alcazar was designed to be a grand hotel for wealthy visitors in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. The architects had to think about much more than simply making the building look impressive. They needed to consider **how people would use the building, where it would be located, how people would move through it, and how its design would create a particular experience.**

Give students an image of the Hotel Alcazar and have them work with a partner to identify architectural features. Ask them to look for:

- Shapes
- Patterns
- Towers
- Windows
- Doors
- Arches
- Decorative details
- Symmetry
- Materials/colors
- Open spaces
- Places where people might enter, gather, or move

Have students complete:

**I notice...**

**I wonder...**

**I think this building was designed this way because...**

## Part 2: Architects Solve Problems

Explain that architects are **problem-solvers**. Give students a simple scenario: "Your community needs a place where children can safely read, play, learn, and meet after school. What kind of building could you design?" Brainstorm as a class. Ask:

- Who will use the building?
- What will they do there?
- What rooms or spaces will they need?
- Where should it be located?
- How will people enter and move around?
- What should it look like?
- How can the building fit into the community?

Introduce the idea that **good architecture combines function and creativity.**

Write on the board:

**FUNCTION + PEOPLE + PLACE + CREATIVITY = ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**

## Section 5: Become Community Architects!

---

### Step 1: The Challenge

Tell students:

**Your community has a problem. You are the architect! Your job is to identify a local need and design a building that could help solve it.**

Students can work individually, with partners, or in teams of 3-4.

### Step 1: Identify a Community Need

Have students brainstorm needs they have noticed in their community.

Possible examples:

- A place for children to read or do homework
- A community garden
- A youth recreation center
- A shelter from rain or extreme heat
- A community art center
- A place for local artists to display their work
- A senior center
- A nature education center
- A recycling center
- A safe gathering space
- A small library
- A visitor/information center
- A community farmers' market
- A bike or pedestrian center

Encourage students to think about **real problems they have observed**, rather than simply choosing a building they think would be fun.

### Step 2: Research the Need

Students answer:

**Our community needs:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who has this need?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why is this important?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where could our building go?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How would our building help?** \_\_\_\_\_

For an additional challenge, have students conduct a quick "community survey" by asking classmates: "What is one thing you think our community needs?"

Students can collect responses and look for common ideas.

### **Step 3: Design the Building**

Students create an architectural plan on paper.  
Their design should include:

- A **name** for the building
- A drawing of the **outside**
- A simple **floor plan**
- At least **3 different spaces/rooms**
- Doors and windows
- Labels identifying important features
- An explanation of how the building solves the community problem

### **Design Requirements**

Tell students:

**Architects, your building must:**

- Solve a real community need.
- Have a clear purpose.
- Be designed for specific users.
- Include at least three spaces.
- Include entrances and exits.
- Consider where the building will be located.
- Include at least one creative architectural feature.
- Be explained to the community.

### **Hands-On Extension: Build a Model**

An optional extension to the project is to turn the drawing into a **3-D architectural model**.

### **Suggested Materials**

- Cardboard
- Construction paper
- Cardstock
- Craft sticks
- Paper cups
- Straws
- Pipe cleaners
- Recycled boxes
- Tape
- Glue
- Scissors
- Markers
- Rulers
- Clay or modeling materials

Challenge students to think like actual architects and engineers:

- **How can you make your building strong enough to stand?**
- **How will you create the roof?**
- **How will people get inside?**
- **How will you make the building accessible to everyone?**
- **How will your design fit its location?**

#### **Step 4: The Architects Present**

Have students present their designs/and or models to the class.

Each student/team should explain:

1. What is your building called?
2. What community need did you identify?
3. Who will use your building?
4. What spaces did you include?
5. How does your building solve the problem?
6. What is your favorite architectural feature?
7. Why did you choose this location?

You can turn the classroom into an **Architectural Exhibition** by displaying the drawings and models.

## Section 6: Student Design Worksheet

---

### LET'S BE ARCHITECTS!

Architect(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Our Building's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Our Community Need:

\_\_\_\_\_

Who needs it?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is this important?

\_\_\_\_\_

Where should we build it?

\_\_\_\_\_

How will our building help?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Our Building Must Have:

- ☐ A clear purpose
- ☐ At least 3 spaces
- ☐ Doors and windows
- ☐ A creative architectural feature
- ☐ A connection to its location
- ☐ A solution to a community need

**On a separate piece of paper, draw your architectural plan:**

*Create a floor plan and exterior design.*

***Explain Your Design***

Our building is called \_\_\_\_\_.

We designed it because our community needs \_\_\_\_\_.

The people who will use it are \_\_\_\_\_.

Our building includes \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.

These features will help our community because:

---

---

---

---

## Exit Ticket

---

Have students complete an exit ticket:

**Before this lesson, I thought architects...**

**Now I know architects...**

**One community problem I would like to solve is...**

**If I were an architect, I would design...**

**The most important thing an architect needs to think about is... because...**

**Big Idea for Students:** Architects don't just design buildings. They design solutions for people and places.



**Thomas Hastings**  
(1860 - 1929)



**John Mervyn Carrère**  
(1858 - 1911)



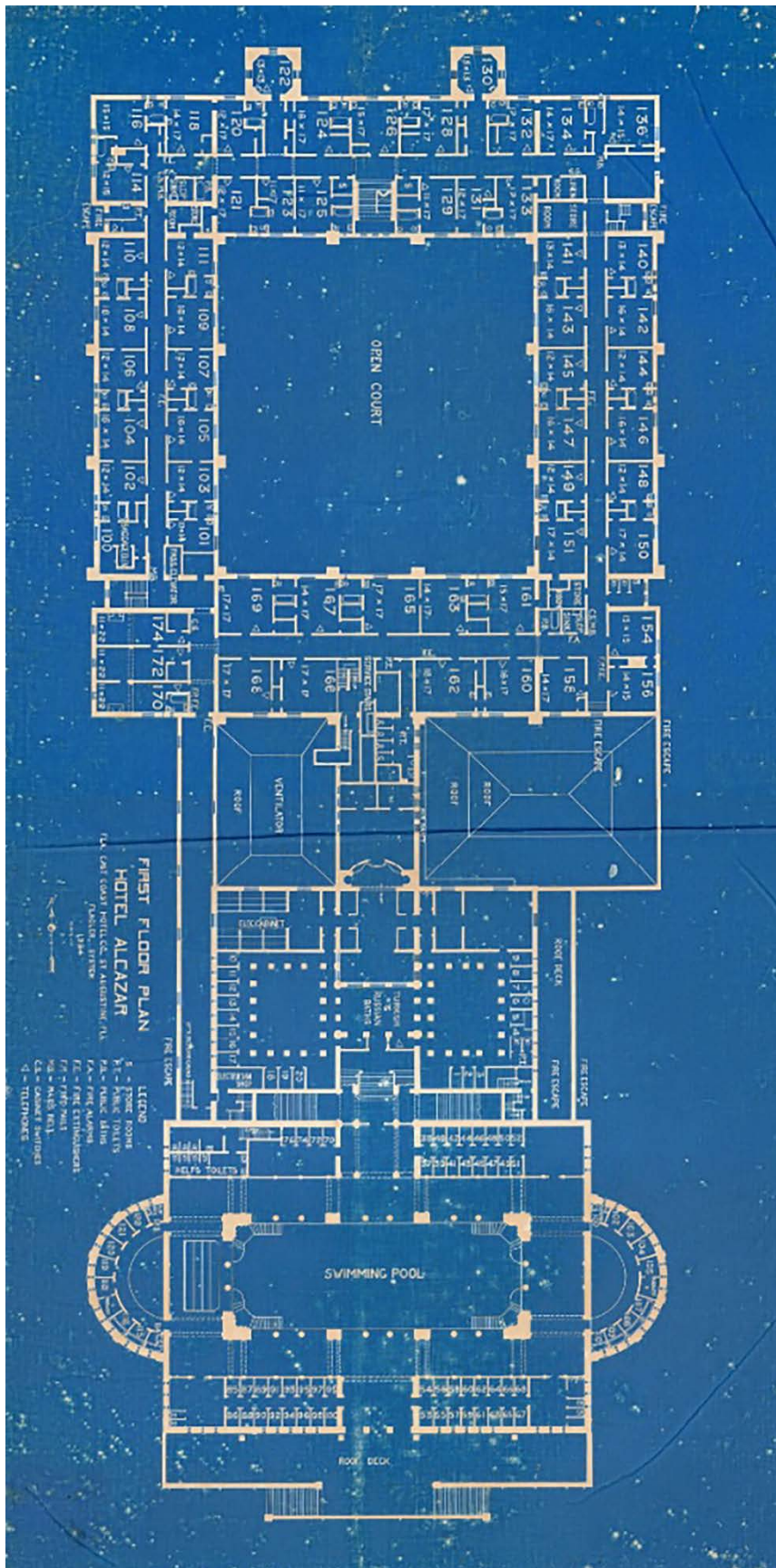
**Hotel Alcazar, St. Augustine, FL**  
Built 1888 by Carrère and Hastings



**Courtyard, Hotel Alcazar, St. Augustine, FL**



**Swimming Pool, Hotel Alcazar, St. Augustine, FL**



**Hotel Alcazar Blueprint  
of First Floor**