



SUSAN DANA & FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
CREATIVE DRAMA ACTIVITY FOR THE CLASSROOM
(Upper Elementary or Middle School)

CONCEPT: Susan Dana and Frank Lloyd Wright were both colorful personalities with strong egos. Susan, the dedicated and wealthy client was a bit mysterious and more independent than most women of her time. Frank Lloyd Wright was also known for his strong will. He was a perfectionist who was convinced that his ideas about design were the only right ones. Blending these two forceful personalities into a working relationship to design the Dana House was quite a feat.

TO THE TEACHER: Please review the history of the Dana-Thomas House with your students, making sure to reinforce understanding of Susan Dana and Frank Lloyd Wright. Make a list of characteristics of these two characters such as the following.

Susan Dana

Frank Lloyd Wright

Born in 1862	Born in 1867
Rich heiress	Famous architect
Widowed; no children	Married with several children
Worked for equal rights of women	Founder of Prairie School style
Worked for equal rights of African Americans	Tried to design houses so people could live more happily
Entertained famous people, politicians	Surrounded himself with people who believed in his ideas
Interested in music and art	Interested in music and art
Read many good books	Read many good books
Fancy, liked to show off	Fancy, liked to show off
A bit odd	A bit odd
Liked things her own way	Liked things his own way

PROCEDURE: Explain to your students that they will be involved in a creative drama exercise today. They will be choosing partners and role playing a conversation between Frank Lloyd Wright and Susan Dana.

1. Talk to your students about the characters of Frank Lloyd Wright and Susan Dana. Ask them to recall information about these two personalities. Make a list of characteristics of Susan Dana and Frank Lloyd Wright on the board from the students' suggestions. Ask the students to decide what things Susan and Frank had in common. Which things were different? Ask the students what qualities Mrs. Dana and Mr. Wright had in common that might make it hard for them to work together.

2. Choose a student to role play with you. You should be Susan Dana and s/he will be Frank Lloyd Wright. Demonstrate a possible first meeting between Mrs. Dana and Mr. Wright. Discuss the kinds of things an architect and client might talk about. Give students hints about first meetings-discuss things in common, be polite, be cautious.

SITUATION 1: FIRST MEETING BETWEEN SUSAN DANA AND FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

3. Ask the students to find a partner. Decide who will be Wright and who will be Dana. Role play the first meeting between Mrs. Dana and Mr. Wright. [All students will be talking quietly simultaneously.] Susan Dana should give Frank Lloyd Wright some suggestions about what she wants. Frank Lloyd Wright should tell about his Prairie School designs.

4. Stop the students after five minutes. Ask several groups to be "in the spotlight" and share their mini-dramas. Talk about the vocal quality. Are the characters speaking softly or loudly? Do they sound friendly or unfriendly? Who is dominating the conversation?

SITUATION 2: ARGUING ABOUT THE DESIGN

5. Ask the students to role play again. This time, say that Susan Dana and Frank Lloyd Wright are disagreeing about the design. Frank Lloyd Wright wants to completely hide Mrs. Dana's father's old house with his new design. Mrs. Dana wants to hang on to a part of the old house. Try to compromise.

6. After a few minutes stop the drama. Ask the students to describe the conversations that ensued in their drama. Ask several groups to be "in the spotlight" and share their drama. Talk about the vocal quality of the characters. Talk about the texture of the voices. Are the characters talking at the same rate? Are they speaking politely or impolitely? Do the voices begin to raise as the characters begin to argue?

7. Repeat the drama. This time suggest that the pairs start their conversation politely and softly and then progressively raise their voices--BUT, just when an argument is about to start, Frank Lloyd Wright remembers he might lose his fee and stops himself. He switches instead to trying to flatter Susan Dana into doing things his way. Does she fall for his deception? How do they compromise.

8. Role play and then share the dramas.