

Building a Shotgun House in Davis Bottom: Teaching Tips

1. The homes that people build and live in do more than meet a basic need. They are also part of their culture. The homes in Davis Bottom in the 1890s were not fancy, and by today's standards, not particularly comfortable. But they were home. Ask students to closely examine the houses in the full painting (page 4 or project the slide in the PowerPoint) and make observations. Things they might notice are:

- The houses are built on piers. Piers protected the houses from the flooding that was common in the area.
- All the houses are more or less identical, with only minor variations. The people who lived in this neighborhood were all working class people.
- The houses all face the street, and they all have front porches. In the painting, you can see that the porches are an important locus of social activity. People on the porches also saw and interacted with people walking down the street.
- Each house has a central brick chimney. This would allow the fireplace to heat the entire house.

Ask students to notice the people in the painting. What are they doing? Are they doing things outside their homes? What is the mood of the painting? Do the people seem happy?

Ask students what the houses might tell them about the neighborhood and the people who lived there.

2. Ask students to describe their own homes and neighborhoods. In what ways are they similar to the Davis Bottom houses and neighborhood in the 1890s? In what ways are they different?

3. Write persona poems about houses (for more about this kind of poem, see *Davis Bottom in the 1890s: Haiku and Other Types of Poems*). You might model the process by working together as a class to write a persona poem about a shotgun house in Davis Bottom, and then ask students to write poems about their own homes. Or you might extend the concept of shelter by asking students to research homes in diverse cultures and write poems about them. You could make a collection of the poems and illustrations (drawn by students or collected from copyright images). Try Wikimedia Commons Images (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Images>) as a resource for free images.

4. Study the houses in the painting. Notice the shapes that make up the houses. How many squares can you find? Rectangles? Triangles? Parallelograms?

Point out that, because of the *perspective*, objects that are actually squares and rectangles in real life will appear as parallelograms (see *Davis Bottom in the 1890s: Teaching Tips*).

You can find a simple lesson plan for leading students in creating illustrations of their own home through the use of shapes here: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/my-home>

5. You can research shelters of diverse cultures through a simple art lesson at this website:

<http://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/everyone-needs-shelter-lesson-plan/>

6. You can explore the technology of roof shapes, pitches, and materials at this website:

<http://tryengineering.org/sites/default/files/lessons/roof.pdf>



