

ArtWonders



## FURNITURE

### Classroom Discussion and Activity Ideas

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# Desk Designs

**Narrative:** Students will explore how artists design and decorate furniture. They will look at desks at school and compare them with the historic French desk included in this web program. Through discussion and the art activity, students will identify what they believe to be good and poor elements in desk designs. To explore decoration, students will learn how to abstract a natural form and include their floral motif on the desk design.

**Discussion:** Look at the 18th-century French desk with the students. Ask them to explore the details as a way of understanding the desk. What are the special features of the desk? Why do you think people needed to lock things in the desk? How do we know people wrote letters and read at the desk? What materials did the artist use? How did the artist decorate the desk? Can you imagine where the desk was used in a home? How many people could sit at this desk?

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**Art Activity:** The suggested art activity has a number of steps.

1. Inventory various desks at school. This can include a student desk, teacher desk and principal desk. Use the student worksheet, *Desk Designs: School Inventory*.
2. Compare the 18th-century and school desks. What's the same, different? What makes a perfect desk? What makes a beautiful desk?
3. Invite students to design their ideal student desk, using the worksheet, *Desk Designs: My Desk*. Part of the proposed activity is the abstraction of a lily to decorate a desktop.

*Note:* For younger students, adapt the activity by having the class jointly inventory desks and collectively design a new one. Or, have students create a personal container for special treasures.

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**Art activity extensions:** Older students may opt to build a model of their desk. Display the models and lead a class critique. What defines a perfect desk?

Younger students can build or decorate a simple pencil box, considering the length as relates to pencils and overall dimensions based on objects stored in the box. Decorate one side with a flower. To enhance the personal nature of the box, students can write a secret “password” on the outside.

**Connections to other subject areas:**

***Language Arts***

Role play, asking students to imagine sitting at the historic desk and writing a letter. What would they write? Next, ask them to read a letter at this desk and lock it up. Why did they lock the letter in the desk?

***Math***

Take measurements of desks at school.

***History***

Learn about life in 18th-century Paris. Learn about how people have lit their homes, in the 18th century and after the invention of the light bulb in the 19th century.

***Science***

Using the student pdf file, *Drawings of Lilies*, study field lilies and water lilies.