



Sèrie 2

Comprensió d'un text oral

America's Best Known Architect

In the following conversation you are going to hear some new words. Read and listen to them. Make sure you know what they mean.

windbag: persona que pontifica

grace: honorar/honrar

flock: congregar

Ready?

Now read the questions on the following page. Read them carefully before listening to the conversation.

Interviewer: Welcome to our weekly program about famous Americans. Tonight, we go after the story of one of the most extraordinary men of our time. He is Frank Lloyd Wright, perhaps the greatest architect of the twentieth century and certainly the most famous American architect ever. And in the opinion of some, America's foremost social rebel. So, let's talk to Mr. Roger Wolf, Frank Lloyd Wright's biographer. Mr Wolf, how would you define him?

Mr Wolf: Well, I'm not the most appropriate person to define him. According to a story in *Life Magazine* not many years back, fellow architects have called him everything, from a great poet to an insufferable windbag. The clergy has deplored his morals, creditors have deplored his financial habits, politicians, his opinions. Admirers of Frank Lloyd Wright consider him as a man one hundred years ahead of his time. I'm an admirer.

Interviewer: One of his most famous statements was "If I had another fifteen years to work, I could rebuild this entire country, I could change the nation." Now, would you tell me why should he, one man, want to change the way of life of millions and millions of people?

Mr Wolf: Well, he thought the way of life in which the country... to which the country is committed needs change.

Interviewer: But don't you think these words show his ego, his self-centeredness? You're saying that practically everyone in the United States is out of step except Frank Lloyd Wright.



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Mr Wolf: Not at all, I'm not saying anything of the kind. It isn't their job to build, it was his. He thought people should have a right to look to their architects for suggestions for what they should build.

Interviewer: Well, as an architect...

Mr Wolf: ...and how they should build it.

Interviewer: As an architect, how would he have liked to change the way that we live?

Mr Wolf: He wouldn't have liked to change so much the way we live, as what we live in, and how we live in it. Wright always said that we ourselves are changing in the buildings we live in. Most people don't really understand what it is to live in an organic building with organic character.

Interviewer: Well now, organic building, organic character, these are words which are difficult to understand.

Mr Wolf: Well, let's say natural, would that suit you better? For Wright, a truly organic building developed from within outwards and was thus in harmony with its time, place, and inhabitants.

Interviewer: I'm still not... I would like specifically, to know what you mean, how would he like to change the way that we live?

Mr Wolf: He meant he'd have liked to have a free architecture, an architecture that belonged where you see it standing, architecture that graced the landscape instead of being a disgrace in the landscape. His clients told him how those buildings he had built for them had changed the character of their whole lives and their whole existence. And it's different now than it was before. Well, he'd have liked to do that for the whole country.

Interviewer: But, imagine New York. When he came to New York, and he saw the skyline of New York, didn't it excite him? After all, he did design the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Most of us think that New York is so spectacular and imposing.

Mr Wolf: In fact, it didn't impress him at all. Because it never was planned, it was all the result of a race for rent, and it is a great monument, he thought, to the power of money and to greed. It wasn't about ideas. He didn't see an idea in the whole thing anywhere. Do you? Where is the idea in it? What's the idea?

Interviewer: The idea is obviously, it seems to me, that a lot of people want to live together to make their livings, to make money, to... to enjoy what this large city has to offer. And I guess from time immemorial people have flocked more or less to one spot to exchange ideas as well as goods.



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Mr Wolf: But there was a justification for that. When there were no other means of communication than by personal contact. That's when the plans for the cities we now live in originated. They originated back in the Middle Ages, when the only way you could have a culture, the only way you could get social distinction or any education, was by joining other people. Today, however, we cannot get modern improvements here in the city anymore.

Interviewer: Let me see if I get your point. Is Fallingwater, Frank Lloyd Wright's most famous work, an example of good architecture? What is it that makes Fallingwater so special?

Mr Wolf: Fallingwater is Frank Lloyd Wright's house built over a waterfall in Pennsylvania for a rich family from Pittsburgh in the 1930s, and it's arguably *the* most famous house of the modern era. I think it's Wright's supreme example of architecture connected to nature, what he called 'organic architecture', because the house is integrated into the landscape. The water flows through the living room.

Interviewer: I get it now. Let's talk about other aspects of Wright's personality. Wright had faith in youth. However, he did not have faith in the mob, yet young people grow into adults and often turn into a mob. Or do I misunderstand?

Mr Wolf: I think you've got it right. He believed that many people were not properly educated and didn't have an opportunity to go right instead of left. He always said that he put a capital N on Nature, and that is where people had to go, go back to Nature. He said that when you go out into a big forest, with towering pines, and experience a feeling of awe, frequently you do connect with the presence of nature, you not only feel large, you feel enlarged and encouraged, intensified, more powerful.

Interviewer: It is clear in your biography that he was rebellious, a radical in his art and life. Do you agree?

Mr Wolf: Absolutely. But don't forget that if you ask the average citizen to name a famous American architect, you can bet that their answer will be Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright gained such cultural primacy for good reason: he changed the way we build and live.

Interviewer: Mr. Wolf, I thank you for talking with us today.

Mr Wolf: Well, you're welcome.



Clau de respostes

1. Why is Frank Lloyd Wright a famous American?

His designs for buildings are admired by architects everywhere.

2. Frank Lloyd Wright wanted people to look to architects and to consult them more because

he wanted to change the type of buildings we live in.

3. What did Frank Lloyd Wright want to reform in the U.S.?

The general way of life.

4. Frank Lloyd Wright liked buildings that

fit into the natural area where they were built.

5. Why did Frank Lloyd Wright not like New York City?

He thought the type of buildings there represented a money-oriented view of society.

6. Why is Fallingwater so famous?

Because a stream runs inside the building.

7. The text says that in certain circumstances we can “experience a feeling of awe.” Which of the following expressions is a synonym for awe in the text?

admiration.

8. According to Mr. Wolf, Frank Lloyd Wright

deserves his fame.



Comprensió lectora

1. The horses we see in Assateague Island are described as “feral”. This means that they...

descend from domestic animals that have become wild over the years.

2. These horses are unique because they...

have adapted to very tough living conditions.

3. How did the horses arrive on the island?

They were most probably taken there to avoid paying tax.

4. Which of the following sentences is NOT true?

The National Park Service is in charge of all the horses on the island.

5. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service...

issues a permit allowing the horses to feed on its grounds.

6. The Pony Penning festival

is a local festival in which horses swim to a nearby island to be sold.

7. The Assateague horses

have adapted to their environment and developed a complex social structure.

8. Visitors to Assateague Island

must treat the horses as wild animals and respect their habitat.