

**Illinois State Museum – MuseumLink Art**  
**A Matter of Style Activity: Furniture Design**

**Purpose:** to help students recognize that traditional elements of design (shape, ornament, motif, or decoration) on furniture are viable today as a medium of expression in our environment.

**Illinois State Museum Web site used:**

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ms.html>

and [http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ms\\_gloss.html](http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ms_gloss.html)



**Objective:** After viewing Nineteenth Century Furniture, the students will design a piece of furniture by incorporating three design elements from a style of nineteenth century furniture into an original design drawing.

**Grade Level:** 4-8

**Time Required:** one class period

**Materials:** sketch paper for ideas, drawing paper, pencil, illustrated glossary from *A Matter of Style* Web module or the label drawings of the furniture pieces (pdfs)

**Motivation:** Review with the students the six styles of nineteenth-century furniture that are featured in the Nineteenth Century Furniture module. Discuss why they like or dislike certain styles. Ask them to differentiate the six styles with descriptive adjectives – big, curvy, old-fashioned, artistic – and tell what elements make them fit these descriptions.

**Procedure:**

- Pass out copies of the glossary and remind students how to relate it to the online images or printouts of the images of the furniture and the labeled line drawings. (post them on the board for reference).
- Students need to keep in mind is that they are to choose their favorite style, then pick three design elements or ornaments from this style. They will use these three elements or motifs in their furniture design, which does NOT otherwise have to look like nineteenth-century furniture (e.g., a plastic chair with embossed roses and cut-outs of tracery on it reflecting the Rococo Style).
- They can choose modern materials for their furniture. How do modern materials affect the choice of ornament? They can choose any piece of furniture they want – a bed, a bookcase.
- Students will sketch their ideas until they get one they like (timed). Students will transfer their sketch clearly to drawing paper (furniture should be large enough to see the details (8" or bigger square).

**Publication and Closure:** each student should show and explain his or her design. From what style did the elements come from (this could be guessed by the audience)? What

elements were borrowed? From what materials would it be made? Why did you design it the way you did?

**Assessment:** the piece of furniture should clearly incorporate three design elements from one style of nineteenth-century furniture from *A Matter of Style* or its sources.

**Illinois State Board of Education Goals and Standards addressed:**

**Visual Art: 27:** Understand the role of the arts in civilizations, past and present.

**Social Science: 18.A:** Compare characteristics of culture as reflected in the arts and traditions.