

American Architecture
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Discussion Questions

Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*

Louis Sullivan was one of the premier architects of the late nineteenth century. He argued forcefully for the development of an American architecture, not one indebted to European traditions. In his own work he pioneered the design of the tall office building, or what we call a skyscraper today, and is known as the “father of the skyscraper.”

Later in life, he wrote a book about American architecture—not the styles but how an architect should work and think. He writes with great gusto, rhetoric, and persuasiveness. He created two characters: a teacher of architecture, and a student (hence the title, *Kindergarten Chats*). Read what the teacher says in “Roman Temple.”

--The teacher and the student are discussing why American buildings should or should not use the classical past as inspiration. In other words, should a modern American building resemble a Roman temple?

--What distinction does he make between public and private architecture?

--What is the responsibility of the architect for Sullivan? What is he saying when he compares the architect to a banker who embezzles?

--What does he say about Roman temples and scholarship?

--If the architect doesn't use scholarship for his design, what should he use according to Sullivan?