

Newport Mansion Analysis

In collaborative groups use the following questions to guide your analysis of a Newport mansion. Divide up responsibilities to research and gather information about the exterior, architect, interior, patrons that occupied the mansion, and American events.

Exterior

Describe the house in relation to the grounds. What type of landscaping exists? How much space is around the house?

Describe the use of building materials for the exterior of the mansion? Why do you think these materials were chosen? Are they native to the area? If not, where did they come from?

How did the architect use various architectural elements on the exterior of the house? Examples of elements include arches, doorways, balconies, sculptures, decorative moldings, steps, porches, etc.

Describe how the architect created a sense of monumental architecture. How did he make the mansions and ground appear imposing and "larger than life"? (Hint: look closely at the house position on the grounds, sweeping steps, raised entrances, gates, and pathways)

Did the architect have a style preference? If so, describe the characteristics of the style as seen in this mansion? How did the architect personalize this style, within the plan of the house?

The Architect

What other buildings and/or homes did this architect build? Where? How are they similar or different from the mansion you are studying?

What was the architect's relationship with the patron? Do you see more of the architect's influence or the patron's influence in the building? Describe one piece of evidence in or on the building to back up your opinion.

Interior

Design a simple floor plan of the mansion labeling all the rooms on all the floors. How does a person enter the house and move from place to place?

Indicate the location in the interior of the house where one could find some of the terms from the Vocabulary sheet such as gold leaf, ormolu, cornices, etc.

Where do you see the influence of the patrons of the house in the interior design? Describe one or two items that indicate their individual influence.

Compare and contrast the functionality versus purpose of one of the first floor rooms. Examine the furniture and its placement, access, comfort, and visual effect.

Choose one room and describe the room in your own words. How does the room make you feel and why do you think it makes you feel that way?

Choose one of the rooms in the house (except the bedrooms). Who would use the room, and for what reason? When would the room be used, and how many people would be in the room when in use?

The Patrons

What was the intention of the clients or owners of the house for building this type of house? Did they succeed? Give evidence of your opinion with examples about the house.

Each mansion you are studying was only open 6-8 weeks during the summer. What other houses did these individuals have? Where? Compare or contrast these houses with the one you studied.

Describe the relationships of the people who lived in the house. Children? Other relatives? How many?

Discuss the number of servants in the house. How many were there? What did they do? Where did they live?

Events



How did the Gilded Age come to be?

What did the era represent?

What significant historical events in America relate to the time?