

Reading Drill #7

Julia Morgan's Architecture

Julia Morgan, a shy, soft-spoken woman, is regarded by some as the United States' most successful female architect. In 1894, she was the first woman to complete the University of California's Civil Engineering program. After she received her undergraduate degree, one of her professors recommended that she travel to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris to continue her education in architecture.

When she arrived in Paris, Morgan was initially refused entry to the school as no woman had been accepted there before. Undeterred, she entered and won several prestigious architectural competitions in Europe. Armed with newfound recognition and with letters of recommendation from several prominent figures in the field of architecture, Morgan applied again to the Ecole des Beaux Arts and was accepted in 1898. Four years later she completed her studies and returned to Oakland, California, to begin immediate work on several projects at Berkeley. The first woman to receive a state architect's license in California, she opened her own office in San Francisco just two years later, beginning an illustrious career that was to span almost fifty years, until the office's closing in 1950.

Few people outside architectural circles have heard of Julia Morgan because she loathed personal publicity and did everything in her power to avoid celebrity. She **shunned** the press and refused to allow her name to be posted at construction sites. Constant battles with ear infections affected her balance and made it difficult for her to walk evenly. Tragically, in the 1920s, complications resulting from surgery on her inner ear left her face asymmetrical. Her physical awkwardness only encouraged her innate reclusive tendencies and pushed her further from the public eye. When she retired, she ordered all of her papers burned, believing that an architect should be like the usually anonymous medieval master builders who created Europe's vast monasteries, cathedrals, and castles. In Morgan's view, a building should **speak for itself**. The structures she designed—notably Berkeley's Hearst Greek Theater, Baptist Divinity School and Hearst Memorial Mining Building, along with a number of other college facilities and residential houses—are elegant testimony to her brilliant architectural vision.

Known as a rare architect with little ego (she never rejected a project because it had a small budget), Morgan was interested neither in innovation for its own sake nor in developing a style readily identifiable as her own. Instead, she focused on the insides of her buildings, making interiors that were elegantly simple, while the exteriors were sober and carefully balanced. Keeping with the philosophy of the Beaux-Arts movement that architecture should focus on and cater to the individual, Morgan strove to build structures that were practical to live and work in. Accordingly, a large percentage of her work consisted of residential commissions. She frequently collaborated with the late Walter Steilberg, a respected architect himself who served as her structural engineer. Steilberg once commented that her **"object"** was first of all to build a home." Her house designs demonstrated respect for the everyday needs of the residents.

An honorary Doctor of Laws degree awarded by the University of California at Berkeley in 1929 well summarizes her mark on the American cultural landscape: "Designer of simple dwellings and stately homes, of great buildings nobly planned to further the centralized activities of her fellow citizens; Architect in whose works harmony and admirable proportions bring pleasure to the eye and peace to the mind." **With its pleasing straightforwardness and lack of waste, Morgan's style warrants more attention than it sometimes receives in the world of contemporary architecture, which values extravagance.** And in a field still dominated by men over a hundred years after her birth, her lifetime of achievement—a record of over 700 completed projects spanning residences, institutions, churches, estates, and community buildings—stands as an inspiration to young women entering careers in architecture.

1. What does the passage mainly discuss?
 - (A) The professional work of Julia Morgan
 - (B) Julia Morgan's knowledge of architectural history
 - (C) The influence of structural engineering on Julia Morgan's career
 - (D) Julia Morgan's role in the women's movement
2. The word **shunned** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - (A) avoided
 - (B) spoke to
 - (C) embraced
 - (D) misunderstood
3. What happened to Julia Morgan's papers?
 - (A) They were donated to a university.
 - (B) They were sold to an engineering firm.
 - (C) They were destroyed.
 - (D) They were stored in a vault.
4. The phrase **speak for itself** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - (A) communicate verbally
 - (B) be designed to carry sound well
 - (C) demonstrate its own qualities
 - (D) be good publicity for its architect
5. It can be inferred from the passage that Julia Morgan paid little attention to which of the following?
 - (A) The wishes of her clients
 - (B) The quality of her buildings
 - (C) Her income
 - (D) Her privacy
6. Click on the sentence in paragraph 4 that refers to Julia Morgan's attitude toward the people for whom she built houses.

7. The word **object** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- (A) process
 - (B) material
 - (C) goal
 - (D) sensitivity
8. It can be inferred from the passage that Julia Morgan
- (A) collaborated with many other architects
 - (B) made a lot of money
 - (C) had a distinctive personal style of design
 - (D) wanted her buildings to be useful
9. The author quotes Walter Steilberg in order to
- (A) disprove a theory
 - (B) describe his work
 - (C) support a previous statement
 - (D) give detail about one of Morgan's projects
10. What does the passage imply about other well-known architects besides Morgan?
- (A) Most were more innovative than Morgan.
 - (B) Many have also emulated the medieval masters in their designs.
 - (C) Some have also burned their personal papers upon retiring.
 - (D) Many have large egos.
11. The passage describes Julia Morgan's buildings as
- (A) old-fashioned
 - (B) large
 - (C) simple
 - (D) innovative
12. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the bolded sentence in the passage? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) Many of Morgan's buildings could not be built today because they would be too expensive.
 - (B) The simplicity of Morgan's buildings is currently undervalued, but she deserves a higher reputation.
 - (C) Contemporary architects are rediscovering Morgan's designs as an influence on their own buildings.
 - (D) Morgan was very honest about her dislike for most contemporary architecture.
13. According to the passage, which of the following contributed to Morgan's shyness?
- (A) The many fans who followed her everywhere
 - (B) Her negative reputation with the press
 - (C) The results of a failed surgery
 - (D) The fire that destroyed her papers