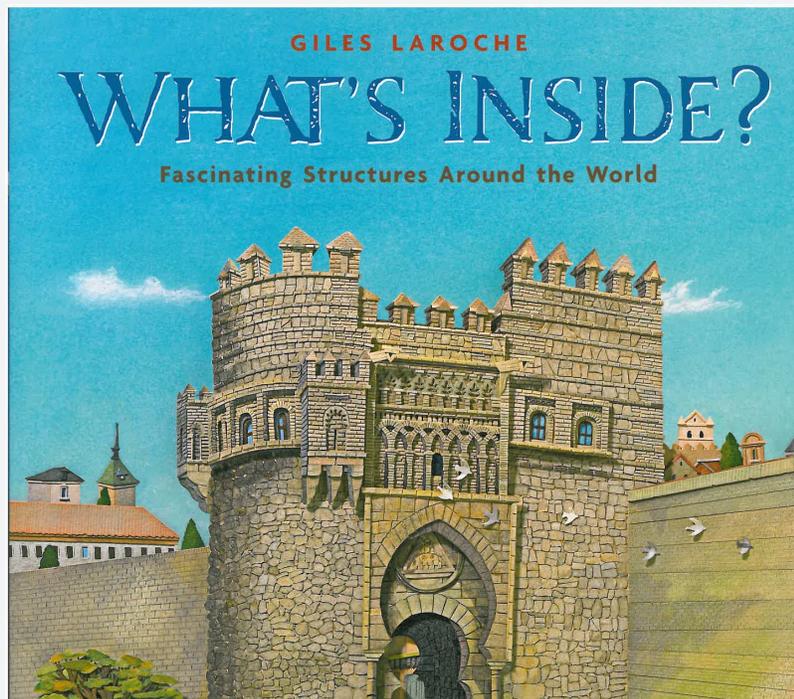


## Second Reaction: Buildings Inside Out

Laroche, Giles. *What's Inside? Fascinating Structures Around the World*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2009.

*Melinda Gilbert*



For his first venture as both author and illustrator, Giles Laroche chooses to highlight his love of places and structures. His book is so full of information that on first viewing, I was really just drawn to the pages with the outside picture of the structure and then the next page's inside reveal. Upon second viewing, I concentrated on the text of each "story," which is given in short, easily read sentences. By the third time through the book I wanted to know more details of each structure. These details were readily found in consistent, well-formatted smaller text next to each interior view. Included in this text is the official name of each structure, its location, date of construction, materials, dimensions, architect(s), how it is used today, and a little known fact about the structure.

The illustrations themselves are also very detailed. It is amazing that they are all done in multiple (up to seven or eight) layers of paper, paint, and glue with drawing and

cutting. Laroche's use of these layers and shadows makes each image look 3-D. This could almost be a pop-up book.

As an adult with a passing interest in architecture, I especially liked the architectural terms in the back of this book. My favorite structures and their pictures were the two Spanish castles and the round New England stone barn.

Three of my nephews had a chance to look at this book over the course of the summer and their comments follow:

"The pictures of the outside architectural structures are really cool, and it makes you wonder how someone could build something like that in such a little time. It is well written and gave a lot of information that I actually didn't know."  
(Ryan, 14, interested in art, architecture, and engineering)

"It was OK, but buildings aren't that exciting to me. I liked the pictures he made." (Aidan, 9)

"If you're into architectural trivia, then this is the book for you! I am not a big fan of buildings myself, but if I was, I would learn a lot from this book. There are lots of facts in this book!" (Will, 11)

I think this book is written and formatted in a way that would be great for a variety of age groups and interest levels. It would make an easy-to-use picture book for non-readers with enough detail in each picture to bring a child back to the book often. Most elementary students could read the basic text in the short passages on each page and also find interest in the detailed illustrations. Young adults (and older ones too) would find the facts by each inside view and the glossary of terms in the back of the book challenging and the pictures not below their intelligence level. Teachers could use the book as a teaching tool for many disciplines from math, art, history, and engineering. Anyone interested in history, architecture, or art would find this book both delightful and interesting.

### About the Author

**Melinda Gilbert** teaches special education students at Lafayette Jefferson High School. Over the years she has taught a wide variety of content classes including art, world history, U.S. history, geography, health, current events, math, and career skills.