

Down on the Farm

Reading, Writing, and Roosters



focus art work

Mark Chagall (1887–1985), France
The Red Rooster, 1940
Bequest of Mary E. Johnston, 1967.1426

focus book

Eric Carle
Rooster's Off to See the World
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972

teacher information unit overview

Roosters, chickens, cows, and horses are all members of a farm community and the focus of this interactive unit for ages three to five. Using the painting *Red Rooster* by Marc Chagall, students engage in a discussion of the painting as an introduction to the farm community. This lesson focuses on the interaction of humans and animals in a rural community. The Eric Carle classic children's book *Rooster's Off To See the World* is used to complement the painting and expand on the concept of animals in their natural environments. This unit strengthens visual perception and reinforces language skills in an engaging and unique manner. Introducing students to the visual resources of the Art Museum provides a new experience and builds on their prior knowledge of farm life, while connecting art to other curriculum areas.

grade level: pre-K (ages 3–5)

unit objectives

- Students closely examine several works of art from the Cincinnati Art Museum's permanent collection, including Focus Artwork *The Red Rooster* by Marc Chagall.
- Students strengthen vocabulary and language skills relating to the farm environment, including verbs describing animal movements and sounds.
- Students respond to questions about what they see with an increasingly complex vocabulary and sentence length.
- Students strengthen color, number, and prepositional concepts as they respond to the painting and to selected books.
- Students express artistic preferences and creativity through drawings, writing, and art materials in response to their experiences in the classroom.

about the artist

Marc Chagall was born in the small Russian village of Pestkowitz on July 7, 1887. Located outside the larger town of Vitebsk, the artist wrote that his life there reminded him of "a potato tossed into a barrel of herring and soaked in pickling brine."¹ Chagall was the eldest of nine children in the close-knit Jewish family. At age of ten, he moved with his family to Vitebsk.

In his new home, Chagall was now able to attend school. The artist spent seven years at the *cheder*, a Jewish lower school, and six years at a public upper school. Upon completing school, Chagall knew he wanted to be an artist and worked to convince his mother to allow him to study art with Jehuda Pen, an eminent Jewish painter of academic landscapes and genre scenes. His mother relented, and at the age of nineteen he began his study. Once he saw his teacher's paintings, Chagall soon decided that he would never paint in the same style and that for himself "the essential thing is art, painting, a painting different from the painting everyone does."²

In the winter of 1906, Victor Mekler, Chagall's friend and fellow artist, persuaded him to leave Vitebsk for St. Petersburg. There he joined the school of the Imperial Society for the Protection of the Arts. Never a fan for academic routine, he left within the year. What he did not learn in school, he learned from the art he saw in the homes of his patrons and friends. From 1908 to 1910 he studied at Svaneva School under Leon Bakst, a known costume and set designer.

Chagall left St. Petersburg in 1910 for Paris. It was here, surrounded by art, that he first developed the style we know today. Chagall attended two art schools in Paris: La Grande Chaumiere and the Palette. However, as before, he felt he learned little in the academies and that his true schools were the Louvre, the Salons, and the galleries of Paris. Inspired by the work of Paul Cezanne, Henri Matisse, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent Van Gogh, he saw and painted color in new and free ways, and his work became abstract. In 1912, he moved out of Paris to the small town of Vaugirard. There he took up residence at La Ruche (the beehive), a studio for emerging artists. It was here that he met the poets and critics who were instrumental in bringing his work into the mainstream Paris artworld.

¹ Greenfield, Howard. *First Impressions: Marc Chagall*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1990, p. 7.

² Kagan, Andrew. *Modern Masters Series: Chagall*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1989, p. 12

In June 1914, Chagall traveled to Berlin for the opening of his first one-man show. He then proceeded on to Vitebsk for a brief visit to see his fiancée, Bella Rosenfeld, whom he married a year later. While the artist was in Russia, World War I began. Due to the war, return to Paris was impossible, and what was to be a short visit became an eight-year stay. While in Vitebsk, Chagall became active in the Russian Revolution. In September 1918, the Soviet Ministry of Culture made him a commissar of art for the Vitebsk region where he founded an art school, the Vitebsk Academy. By the middle of 1919, Chagall began to feel the pressure of the conservative Soviet system. Confronted with conflicts on all sides, he resigned from his position as commissar and as the director of the Vitebsk Academy.

In May 1920, Chagall, his wife, and their young daughter, Ida, moved to Moscow. This was a hard time for the artist, having fallen out of favor with the new Communist regime, state acquisitions of his work came to an end. The family stayed in Moscow for two years while Chagall taught art at a colony for war orphans. The family left Russia permanently in 1922, moving first to Berlin and then to Paris in 1923.

The Chagalls remained in France for the next fifteen years, a peaceful and joyous period for the family. Unfortunately, Chagall's return to Paris was also met with great loss. When he left La Ruche nine years earlier, he had locked his studio for safekeeping until his return. When he returned to retrieve his finished canvases and supplies, he found them gone, having been sold by his friends who never expected to see him again. From 1923 to 1926, the artist worked to recreate these lost paintings. Thus, Chagall did not return to Paris with a new style, he returned and reestablished his known style. While he continued to work in new media, his subject matter—that of dreamy, fantasy-like images—remained the same throughout his career. His work of this time included book illustrations, scenes from his travels, romantic portraits of he and his wife, and most notably, scenes of circuses.

As the 1930s came to a close and World War II began, Chagall's work reflected his feelings on the troubled political environment of Europe. Early in 1938, reports of Nazi atrocities against Jews were filtering into France, and Chagall was soon condemned by the Nazis as a Jew and a Bolshevik. After much convincing, Chagall left Paris, moving first to Provence and then to Marseilles, where departure from France could easily be arranged. Assisted by American Counsel General, the Chagalls crossed the Franco-Spanish border on May 7, 1941, en route to Madrid. Once in the Spanish capital, the Nazis again tried to keep Chagall from fleeing by impounding his packing cases of over one thousand paintings. With the help of a curator at the Prado, the cases were released, and the Chagalls found themselves on a train for Lisbon, where they embarked by ship to New York, arriving on June 23, 1941.

The Chagalls spent seven years in New York City. During the autumn of 1944, while working in the Adirondack Mountains in New York state, sadness came to Chagall with the death of Bella. The spring of 1946 brought Chagall great acclaim in the form of a retrospective of his work at the Museum of Modern



about the art

Art in New York. He was honored again a year later with a retrospective exhibition at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris. He visited Paris briefly for the opening and a year later, in August of 1948, returned permanently. Upon his return, Chagall was greeted with great celebration and adulation and was pursued by an endless stream of collectors, critics, publishers, dealers, and journalists. In 1949, he moved to Provence in the south of France to work, and it was during these years that he rediscovered the vital energy of color. His works of this period were dedicated to themes inspired by his love and the joy of his life, Bella, who had died in 1944. This period also brought a relationship with Virginia Haggard with whom he had a son.

In 1952, Chagall married Valentina (Vava) Brodsky, a friend of his daughter Ida. Twenty-five years his junior, Vava served as the artist's muse and assistant. During the late 1950s, Chagall's work grew to a large scale, and he was commissioned to create several stained glass windows for the cathedral in Metz, France (1958), and the synagogue of the Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital in Jerusalem (1960). During his final years, Chagall cut back on his large commissions, but still produced some monumental works like the ceiling of the Paris Opera House and a 1967 mural for the New York Metropolitan Opera. As his health failed, he retired to his home in Saint-Paul de Vence, France, where he died in 1985 at the age of 97.

The Art Museum's painting, *The Red Rooster*, was created by Chagall in 1940, during a time of great unrest in Europe. In this painting, the artist depicts not a scene of war or an artist's response to it, but a dreamlike scene of a red rooster and a blue-faced man. The man is seen flying through the sky toward a large tree under which a donkey-type animal plays a violin. The red rooster, exaggerated in size, also seems to be walking or floating to the same tree, a destination for both.

This painting is a wonderful example of Chagall's dreamy, musical, and fantastical artistic style. Throughout his career, Chagall used rich bold colors and drew from his imagination and his dreams for subject matter. He also incorporated his memories into his work, based on his growing up in a Jewish community in Russia. In this work, we see a donkey playing a fiddle or violin. To Chagall, the fiddler was a man who played at certain times of life: at birth and at death. This symbol reoccurs in many of his works as does the tree, a symbol of life. The inclusion of animals, like the red rooster, draws us back to his childhood and the animals that he saw during his life in Vitebsk.

information on focus book

Eric Carle, *Rooster's Off to See the World*

This is a story of one rooster who sets off on an adventure, inviting other animals along the way to join him (two cats, three frogs, four turtles, and five fish). When night falls, each realizes what they are missing at home, and returns to the safety and comfort of their natural habitats. Rooster agrees he is unprepared for such a journey and settles happily back on the farm. The story ends with a dream, reminiscent of the dreamlike quality of Chagall's painting.

This book has colorful artwork; clear, simple, and predictable text; descriptions of animals in their natural habitats; and engaging graphics to reinforce math concepts. The story of a rooster who has ambitions to travel and see the world is particularly suited to the Chagall painting of an oversized rooster on the move.



Lesson #1

Barnyard Banter

Exploring Animal Sounds

materials

large-sized edition of *Barnyard Banter* by Denise Fleming
rooster prop/puppet
clipboard or chart paper

procedure

1. Introduce the term “farm” and ask the following questions to promote discussion on student knowledge of farms:

- What is a farm?
- Who lives on a farm?
- What is a barnyard?
- What is a farmer? What do they do?
- Can you name some farm animals?
- What do the farm animals do at night?
- What do the farm animals eat?

2. Ask students to share animal sounds that might be heard on a farm. Students may be encouraged to act out their favorite farm animals and how they communicate.

3. Have students listen to a reading of *Barnyard Banter* by Denise Fleming. Students should be encouraged to identify the names of animals and the sounds they make.

4. Engage students in a discussion of what they already know about roosters, perhaps using a three-dimensional rooster or puppet as a prop. Teacher will record student responses.

5. Make this book available for individual reading along with other appropriate fiction and nonfiction farm-related books in the class library/reading center.

time/setting

Large Group Time

objectives

- Students become familiar with vocabulary relating to farm animals and farm life through reading and shared discussion.

vocabulary

(Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary www.webster.com)

farm: plot of land devoted to the raising of animals, and especially domestic livestock.

barn: building for the storage of farm products or feed and usually for the housing of farm animals

barnyard: fenced area next to a barn

rooster: adult male chicken

strut: to walk with a proud step

banter: to speak in an amusing and teasing manner

crow: to make the loud shrill sound characteristic of a rooster

peck: to strike repeatedly with the bill

national standards

LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts.

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

LIFE SKILLS

Standard 1: Contributes to the overall effort of the group.

Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

SCIENCE

Standard 12: Understands the nature of scientific inquiry.

head start outcomes

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

LISTENING & UNDERSTANDING

LD 1: Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems.

LD 3: Understands an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.

SPEAKING & COMMUNICATING

LD 3: Uses an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary in speaking English

LD 5: Develops increasing abilities to understand and use language to communicate information, experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, needs, questions, and for other varied purposes.

LD 6: Progresses in abilities to initiate and respond appropriately in conversation and discussions with peers and adults.

LD 7: Uses an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.

SCIENCE

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

SC 6: Expands knowledge of and abilities to observe, describe, and discuss the natural world, materials, living things, and natural processes.



Lesson #2 Learning to Look Making Friends with the Red Rooster

time/setting

Large Group Time

objectives

- Students examine closely a reproduction of Focus Artwork *The Red Rooster*, and respond to guiding questions about what they see.
- Students listen to the reading of Focus Book *Rooster's Off to See the World* by Eric Carle.

materials

large reproduction of Focus Artwork *The Red Rooster* or class set of laminated copies made from this guide

Focus Book *Rooster's Off to See the World* by Eric Carle

stuffed animals or manipulatives that represent animals in book



procedure

1. Share with students large reproduction of Focus Artwork or give each student in the group his or her own copy of the Focus Artwork to explore. Encourage silent/quiet looking, followed by the use of guiding questions to elicit their responses to what they see. Questions should include:

- What do you see?
- What is happening in this picture? Why?
- Where is the rooster going?
- Where do roosters live?
- What/Who else is in the picture? What are they doing?

Be careful to repeat to the group what each child has observed and to avoid any judgments or right/wrong answers. It is also very helpful to have another staff member available to record responses for future documentation.

2. Read Eric Carle's *Rooster's Off to See the World* to the class. This book lends itself nicely to felt board or other forms of story extensions, like stuffed animals, or to retelling by students in their own words. Manipulation of real objects representing the animals in the story assists the students in grasping the math concepts presented by the author.

national standards

LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts.

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

LIFE SKILLS

Standard 1: Contributes to the overall effort of the group.

Standard 2: Performs self-appraisal.

Standard 3: Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations.

Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

MATHEMATICS

Standard 2: Understands and applies basic and advanced properties of the concepts of numbers.

Standard 3: Uses basic and advanced procedures while performing the processes of computation.

head start outcomes

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

LISTENING & UNDERSTANDING

LD 1: Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems.

LD 3: Understands an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.

SPEAKING & COMMUNICATING

LD 3: Uses an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary in speaking English

LD 5: Develops increasing abilities to understand and use language to communicate information, experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, needs, questions, and for other varied purposes.

LD 6: Progresses in abilities to initiate and respond appropriately in conversation and discussions with peers and adults.

LD 7: Uses an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING

INITIATIVE & CURIOSITY

ATL 4: Grows in eagerness to learn about and discuss a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks.

MATHEMATICS

NUMBERS & OPERATIONS

MA 2: Begins to associate number concepts, vocabulary, quantities, and written numerals in meaningful ways.

MA 3: Develops increasing ability to count in sequence to 10 and beyond.

MA 4: Begins to make use of one-to-one correspondence in counting objects and matching groups of objects.

MA 5: Begins to use language to compare numbers of objects with terms such as more, less, greater than, fewer, equal to.

MA 11: Builds an interesting understanding of directionality, order, and positions of objects, and words such as up, down, over, under, top, bottom, inside, outside, in front, and behind.



Lesson #3

Sing Along with Rooster

procedure

1. Read the book *I Had a Rooster* to the class/small group. This is a traditional folk song with wonderful, predictable repetition and a delightful refrain that uses the noise a rooster makes in a fun and easily grasped format. It builds on the sounds already presented in *Barnyard Banter*, and the illustrations portray the same whimsical and dreamlike quality of the Focus Artwork *The Red Rooster*.
2. Add a tune either vocally or with musical accompaniment for a second reading. Students will be encouraged to participate with chorus and repetitive phrases.
3. Introduce animal props, if available, to enhance book reading. You may also choose to have a large reproduction of the Focus Artwork available for comparisons to book.
4. Make book, props, and music available for future casual interaction.

time/setting

Group Time/Reading Center.

objectives

- Students practice rhyming, repetition, and pattern awareness in speech by group and individual reading of a book that can also be sung.
- Students follow along as book is being read or sung.
- Students participate in chorus of poem/song.
- Students manipulate animal props to retell the story in their own words.

materials

large reproduction of Focus Artwork: *The Red Rooster*

book: *I Had a Rooster* by Laura Seeger (CD included in book)

CD player or guitar or other instrument to provide accompaniment if possible

small soft stuffed animals representing animals in book for manipulation, recall, retelling, counting, and classification

national standards

MUSIC

Standard 1: Sings, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.

LIFE SKILLS

Standard 1: Contributes to the overall effort of the group.
Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

head start outcomes

CREATIVE ARTS

MUSIC

CA 1: Participates with increasing interest and enjoyment in a variety of music activities, including listening, singing, finger plays, games, and performances.

LITERACY

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

LI 2: Shows growing awareness of beginning and ending sounds of words, games, songs, stories, and poems.

resources

- Baker, Keith. *Big Fat Hen*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.
- Carle, Eric. *Rooster's Off to See the World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972.
- Ehlert, Lois. *Color Farm*. New York: Lippincott, 1990.
- Fleming, Denise. *Barnyard Banter*. New York: Holt, 1994.
- Fox, Mem. *Hattie and the Fox*. New York: Bradbury Press, 1988 .
- Gunson, Christopher. *Over on the Farm*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1997.
- Hillenbrand, Will. *Fiddle-I-Fee*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 2002.
- Hutchins, Pat. *Rosie's Walk*. New York: Little Simon, 1998.
- Lewis, Wendy. *Going to Sleep on the Farm*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1992.
- Lillie, Patricia. *When the Rooster Crowed*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1991.
- Martin Jr., Bill and Archambault, John. *Barn Dance*. New York: H. Holt, 1986.
- Scarry, Richard. *The Rooster Struts*. New York: Golden Books, 2004.
- Seeger, Laura. *I Had a Rooster*. New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishers, 2001.
- Stone, Venice. *Cock-a-Doodle-Do! A day on the Farm*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1992.
- Williams, Sue. *I Went Walking*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990.



Art-Making Experience Feathery Friends

time/setting

Table in art area or special activity area where students can work with several peers with guidance from the teacher.

objectives

- Students have the opportunity to create a three-dimensional design using wire, glue, Styrofoam, and various collage materials.
- Students make connections through art materials to their experiences with the Focus Artwork the books being studied, and to the overall class farm unit.
- Students use their imaginations and observations of animals in the classroom and as seen in art and literature to create a realistic or fanciful creature.

materials

Styrofoam purchased or cut in various shapes

colored toothpicks

pipe cleaners

tissue paper

red feathers

googly eyes

pom poms

paint

glue

Play-Doh or Model Magic to provide a stable base



procedure

1. Explain to students that they will be creating their own animal sculptures. Before beginning the art activity, you and your students may want to have a discussion about different animals and what makes each animal distinctive. Examples: long floppy ears on a rabbit, a comb on a rooster, or a mane on a horse.
2. Ask students to experiment with different ways of constructing with the materials provided. Students should be encouraged to use their creativity to create creatures of their imaginations. If Styrofoam shapes are unavailable, Play-Doh or Model Magic could be used instead.
3. Elicit responses from students as they create, and in doing so, encourage conversation among the students, recording responses when possible for future documentation.
4. If possible, save these creations to be arranged into a “museum exhibition” for parents and students from other classes to further discuss and appreciate.

further art extensions

- Draw a blank frame and print it on white 8 x 11 piece of paper to have available in the art center for students to create their own image and/or art museum display.
- Use multicolored tissue paper to collage onto cutout animal shapes. Or after allowing students to create a colorful tissue paper collage, cut out animal shapes from their collages, and use them to create their own versions of Eric Carle’s *Rooster’s Off to See the World*.
- With an overhead projector and a transparency of the Focus Artwork project the image onto white paper on a wall/easel. Students can then trace or fill in the image using crayons and markers. This activity often motivates students to then create their own designs on clear film—leftover laminate film works well—to project onto the wall.

national standards

VISUAL ARTS

Standard 1: Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts.

Standard 2: Performs self-appraisal.

head start outcomes

CREATIVE ARTS

ART

CA 3: Gains ability in using different art media and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation.

CA 4: Progresses in abilities to create drawings, paintings, models, and other art creations that are more detailed, creative, or realistic.

CA 5: Develops growing abilities to plan, work independently, and demonstrate care and persistence in a variety of art projects.

CA 6: Begins to understand and share opinions about artistic products and experiences.





Mark Chagall, *The Red Rooster*, 1940, Bequest of Mary E. Johnston, 1967.1426.

Dear Adult Friends and Caregivers,

As you know, your child recently participated in an art-integrated curriculum created by the Cincinnati Art Museum which explored life on the farm. During this series of lessons, your child had the opportunity to discover this painting by famed Russian artist Marc Chagall. The painting, entitled *The Red Rooster*, inspired a variety of responses and conversations.

We hope that you will look at *The Red Rooster* together with your child and talk about it. Below please find a variety of extension activities that you and your child may wish to try to expand the learning they have begun in class.

1. Visit a local farm or petting zoo with your family. Ask your child to identify the animals they learned in class.
2. Make up a story about one or more of your favorite animals.
3. Draw pictures of each family member with their favorite animal.
4. Have a family contest to see who can make the most different animal sounds.
5. Make your own fantasy farm. Cut pictures of animals out of magazines, then cut each animal into parts and make crazy combinations (for example, head of a cow, body of a chicken, feet of a horse). Be sure to give names to your fantasy animals.
6. Visit the Cincinnati Art Museum. Call (513) 721-ARTS for more information, or go online at: www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org. You can see the original *Red Rooster* while here!

Not from Cincinnati? Visit your local museum and look for images of other animals that live on the farm. Make their sounds as you look at each.



Mark Chagall (1887–1985)

France

The Red Rooster, 1940

Bequest of Mary E. Johnston, 1967.1426