
Art Masterpiece: Marc Chagall "I and the Village", 1911

Oil on canvas, 6' 3 5/8" x 59 5/8"

Current Location: Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York

Keywords: Symbolism

Grade: 5th- 6th grade

Activity: "Visual Diary" Drawing



Symbolism – something that represents a real object such as an idea, an emotion or a state of mind.

Meet The Artist:

- Marc Chagall was born in a small Russian village named Vitebsk (VEE-tepsk) in 1887. If he were alive today he'd be _____ years old.
- His spent much of his childhood daydreaming, drawing and spending time with animals in the village. He also enjoyed the stories and the Jewish folktales his family members told him.
- Marc Chagall's village was very small and he did not see his first painting until he was 13 years old. It was around this time that Marc knew he wanted to be an artist.
- His family was poor, Jewish shop-owners and disapproved of Marc's desire to be an artist. Eventually they gave in and sent him to art school in St. Petersburg, the capital city of Russia.
- There Marc discovered work by great Impressionistic artists like Monet, Cezanne and Van Gogh. He travelled to Paris where he was influenced by cubist artist, Picasso. These artists inspired him to use more color and simple shapes to convey emotion.

- Marc kept his work original by using dreams and memories as his subjects. He was famous for taking ordinary scenes and transforming them into dream-like worlds. This was sometimes called Surreal or Fantastic Art.
- Back in Russia, Marc met his wife Bella in 1914. He was deeply in love with her and painted her many times. They had a daughter and moved to Paris together.
- During World War II Chagall had to leave Paris because he felt it was unsafe for Jewish people there. He moved to America where he continued to work. Eventually he retired to the South of France where he died at the age of 97.

Artwork Background: I and the Village -History

I and the Village is a “narrative self-portrait” featuring memories of Marc Chagall's childhood in the town of Vitebsk, in Russia. The dreamy painting is ripe with images of the Russian landscape and symbols from folk stories. The picture can be broken down into five distinct sections. The first at the top right includes a rendering of Chagall's hometown, with a church, a series of houses and two people. The woman and some of the houses in the village are upside down, further emphasizing the dreamlike quality of the work. Below that we see a green-faced man who some say is Chagall himself. At the bottom of the work, we see a hand holding a flowering branch. Next to that, an object which some say is a child's bouncing ball – perhaps a plaything from Chagall's earlier days. Finally, we see the image of a milkmaid layered atop the head of a lamb – a motif common to Chagall. (Cows, bulls and lambs figure in many of Chagall's paintings as cosmic symbols).

The important thing to note about this picture is that it is a reflection of Marc Chagall's dreams and memories. Also relevant is the fact that many of Chagall's pictures (including this one) have symbols that relate specifically to Jewish folklore.

I and the Village is one of Chagall's earliest surviving works. In it, he ignored the laws of gravity. Objects are upside down, things appear to float and perspective is disregarded entirely. Instead, Chagall chose to focus on color, form and shape. The result is a very emotional work – a visual diary of Marc Chagall's life.

Discussion of the Art Print:

Is this picture painted in a realistic style? (No, more like fantasy.) Why do you say that? (The man's face and the cow's head are painted unrealistic colors; objects float in unusual places and some are upside down; the picture is broken up into colorful shapes. Etc.)

Chagall used his imagination to create this fantasy picture. Does the painting remind you of a dream? How is this like a dream? (ideas are random, mixed up and seem unrealistic at times)

Why do you think he painted some people upside down or up in the air? (If Chagall felt joy or that the person he painted was happy, he would place them up in the air or flying) Look for this in the painting.

What **colors** do you see in the painting? Do you see more than one shade/tint of red? Where? (In the background shapes, the cow's head, the man's hat and the village buildings.)

Why do you think he chose unrealistic colors? (It was to help us know these images were not real.)

Why the green face? (Chagall would paint things that were significant to him the color green. Green symbolized a person of importance to him.)

Do you see the line between the man's eye and the cow's eye? How do you think the man feels about the cow? (He seems to be fond of the cow. But, how do we know? They appear linked together.)

What other things do you see? (Woman milking a goat, a man with a scythe, a village with a church, an upside down woman)

Activity: "My Visual Diary " Drawing

Materials: white drawing paper or cardstock, colored pencils, individual pencil sharpeners, and erasers

Procedures:

1. Explain the project to the students first. Challenge students to really think about their project before they start. It should reflect their thoughts, feelings, likes and dislikes. They should pull their ideas from childhood memories or dreams.
2. Have the students lightly draw a large X from corner to corner on their drawing paper. This will section off the paper into four areas.
3. Instruct students to choose a section of the paper and draw: (list these on whiteboard)
 - Their home or school,
 - next, have them turn their papers and draw themselves holding a favorite thing
 - Turn the papers again and draw a favorite childhood memory.
 - The final section should be a depiction of a dream they have had. The dream does not have to make sense or appear real.
4. Now they will add colored pencil to add details to their pencil drawing.
5. After the rendering is finished it is time to fill the background of each section. Encourage them to use personal symbols and favorite colors to vividly color in and fill each background. Each section should be unique and stand out from the other. Have them experiment with light and dark colors or blending of colors. Color should help show their emotions. See art print.
6. Have students sign their work.
7. If you have time, ask students to share their work with the class. Enjoy.

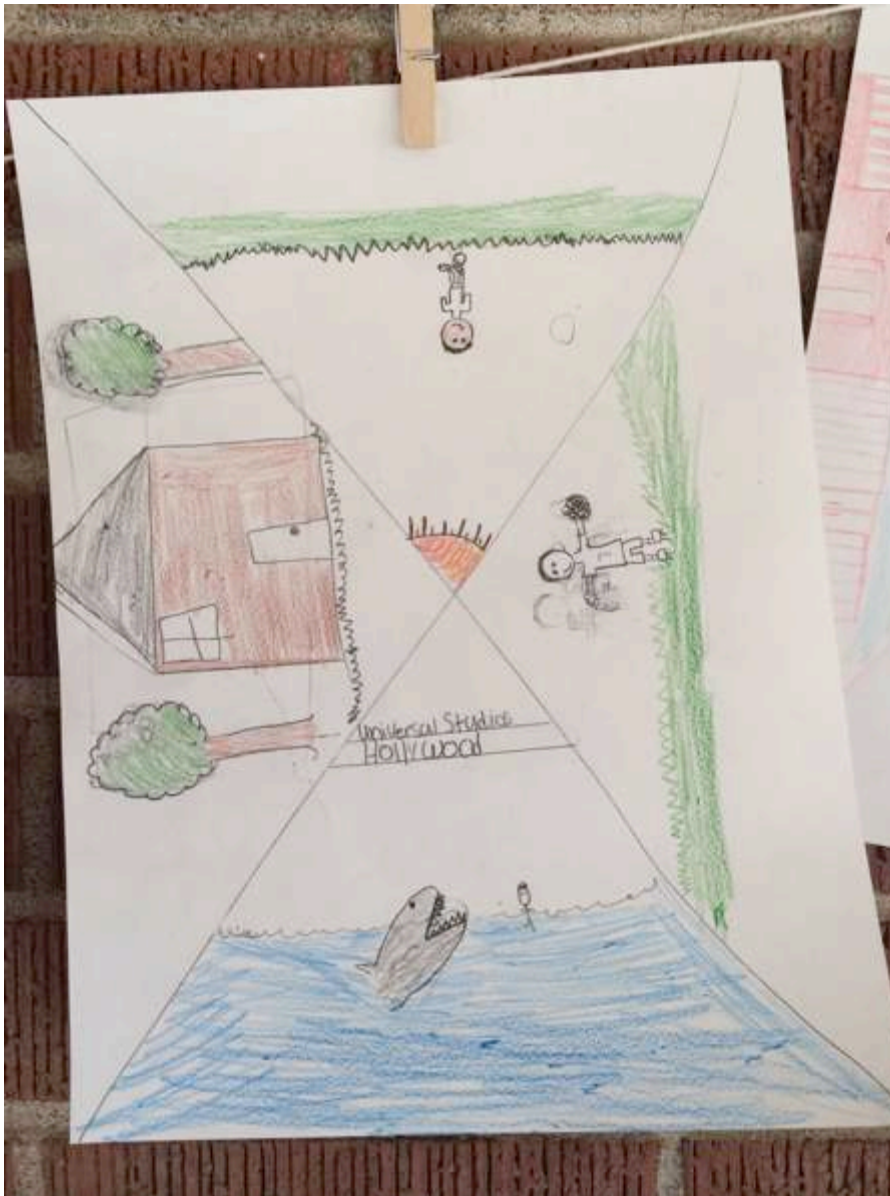
IDEAS FOR ACTIVITY – Significant events, people, places and things in my life:

PEOPLE: parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, special friends, teacher, doctor, etc.

PLACES: where you were born, where you live – past or present, church, school, where you play – park, pool, room, playground, where you’ve traveled, etc.

THINGS: music, books, toys, sport, dance, pets, etc.

SPECIAL MEMORIES / EVENTS: birthday, favorite vacation, Christmas or other special holiday, 1st time riding a bike, going to school, etc.



Chandler Unified School District Art Masterpiece



Student Sample. These samples are not finished but show the concept of dividing and rotating the paper as they draw. To complete this sample the student will need to add color and a background filled with symbols and vibrant color. (Please forward other examples of this project to the District to add to this lesson for future reference. TIA)

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Chagall was known for using dreams and memories as his subjects. He was famous for taking ordinary scenes and transforming them into dream-like worlds. This was sometimes called Surreal or Fantastic Art.

Brief info about the project: Today your child drew a sequence of images that depicted real life memories and dreams to create a surreal visual diary. They included symbols to represent ideas and emotions.



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